

MISANTHROPY IN THE WORK OF JONATHAN SWIFT AND ALEXANDER POPE

Thomas Scruton

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil
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**MISANTHROPY IN THE WORK OF
JONATHAN SWIFT AND ALEXANDER POPE**

By Thomas Scruton

**Submitted for the Degree of M.Phil at the
University of St. Andrews in November 1999**



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Thesis Abstract

This thesis investigates the use of misanthropy as a rhetorical tool in the work (in particular the satire) of Swift and Pope. It deals with the connection between these two writers' perception of society and their desire to attack it with satire, and also their own perceived positions in society. It examines precedent and tradition for their approach, and pinpoints their primary objectives as regards the rhetorical use of misanthropy.

The investigation then attempts to identify a coherent agenda for the use of rhetorical misanthropy in the work of each writer, and examines how their relationship with society affects their respective satirical voices. It then examines their characteristic methods, and attempts to glean from these an outline of the general ideology to which each subscribes in his satirical agenda. Using *Gulliver's Travels* as its main point of reference, it then examines the attempts of the misanthropic thinker to find a satisfactory place in society, and the relationship this search bears to the intellectual development of each writer.

The thesis then deals with Swift's and Pope's attitudes to women; it recognizes their place in the eighteenth century (and earlier) 'phallogentric' tradition, and details the methods they use to perpetuate this tradition. It examines the ways in which these writers attempt to present women as inherently detrimental to the progress of society, and also the techniques they propose for controlling this potential destructiveness.

The thesis attempts to show how these writers felt they could remodel the structure of society, both in their own fields of knowledge and in general. It identifies the importance of a rhetorical persona as a satirical tool, and suggests that Pope and Swift may be set in a literary and philosophical context which opens the potential for mindless invective and groundbreaking dynamic satire in excitingly equal measure.

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INTRODUCTION

Both Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope evince, at various times in their respective careers, a desire to turn aside from the 'mass' of humanity and to move into a circle of trusted and respected friends and colleagues with whom they can create the kind of environment best suited to their intellectual and moral temperaments. However, the desire to attack the follies and vices of society burns so strongly in the minds and hearts of these two that the urge to create satire is overwhelming, thus necessitating a continual intellectual connection with society. Writing to Pope in November 1725, Swift expresses this inner conflict between the desire for separation and the urge to be involved and influential:

Drown the world, I am not content with despising it, but I would anger it if I could with safety. I wish there were an Hospital built for its despisers, where one might act with safety and it need not be a Large Building, only I would have it well endowed...¹

Here Swift is in comparatively genial and entertaining mood, but this is a consequence of him writing with Pope and his other friends in mind, rather than the remainder of mankind, which so often angers and disgusts him. Swift is strongly driven by the desire to be instrumental in exposing corruption and rectifying social ills as he finds them, but when his attempts fail, he is overwhelmed by disgust at mankind's recalcitrance. Writing to Edward Blount a couple of years earlier, Pope expresses a similar disaffection with society, but without the ever-present desire to influence proceedings that Swift seems to carry:

Torbay is a Paradise, and a Storm is but an Amusement to such people. If you drink tea upon a Promontory that overhangs the sea, it is preferable to an Assembly; and the whistling of the Wind better music to contented and loving minds than the Opera to the Spleenful, Ambitious, Diseas'd, Distasted, and Distracted Souls, which this World affords; nay, this World affords no other. Happy they! who are banish'd from us: but happier they, who can banish themselves; or, more properly, banish the World from them!

Alas! I live in Twickenham!²

¹Swift to Pope, 26 November 1725; *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Harold Williams (Five volumes, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1963), iii.116-17.

²Pope to Edward Blount, 27 June 1723; *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1956), ii.176.

Pope seems here to be yearning for detachment from the world, or perhaps even from life itself (although the tone of the passage is a little too jovial to really suggest that Pope is despairing), but he keeps his sentiments grounded in the mundane by using the comparison between Torbay and Twickenham. Torbay attracts Pope because he sees the ability to construct a small, civilized world, where one may 'drink tea upon a Promontory', within the environment created by the forces of nature, rather than the forces of society (something which he attempted at Twickenham with his house, garden and grotto). Pope gives us the image of a damaged and corrupted humanity ('Diseas'd, Distasted and Distracted') digging its way further into its own depravity with 'Spleenful, Ambitious' determination. Of course, both Pope and Swift, as committed Tories, would be open to the possibilities of a haven from society since the failure of the previous Tory government, more than a decade before Pope's letter to Blount was written. However, while Swift retains the desire to interfere with proceedings in general society, Pope seems content to absent himself from it altogether, to 'banish the world' and live simply, in the company of nature and other like-minded individuals.

This difference in attitude to absence from society is a natural reflection of each individual writer's treatment by, and involvement in, social structures, but these in turn are simply symptoms of their complex personalities. Swift was ill-used by politics, especially those of his own Church of Ireland, but this was largely because he so often chose to stand alone as an isolated figure attacking the establishment. Pope, on the other hand, preferred to make his attacks on the particular and the topical (an approach with which Swift strongly disagreed) and liked to shelter from retaliatory blows whenever he could, if necessary by allowing some other writer to take both the credit and the blame for his own attacks. A.D. Nuttall takes Pope's side in the compassion argument when he claims that 'it is Swift with all his misanthropic violence who is closer to the primal antipathies of infancy; Pope in comparison is almost humane.'³ However, this is surely more a result of Pope's more reticent social (and therefore also public-literary) persona; Swift attacks with force, or 'misanthropic violence' because he knows he can withstand (at least to a greater extent than Pope can) any retaliatory blows, and that, in any case, his reputation deters retaliation. Pope was more vulnerable to personal abuse and attacks, and so keeps his most cutting misanthropies for, so to speak, special poetic occasions. He is not afraid to attack individuals, but he only does so with careful calculation, when he is certain that he has a strong satirical structure to support his invective.

³A.D. Nuttall, *Pope's 'Essay on Man'* (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1984), p.10.

Pope inspired more hatred in his own society than virtually any other literary figure, of his own, or any, age. Different to the modern example of the Rushdie fatwah, where a specific instance of literary conduct incites a formal structure of retaliation, Pope was subject to a pervasive dislike that was perhaps not so physically threatening (although after the publication of *The Dunciad* in 1742-3 he was only prepared to leave his house in the company of two large dogs and a pair of hunting pistols) but similarly formative in terms of the individual victim's character. Pope quickly developed an inferiority complex in life, and this made his approach to literary duels more wary than that of Swift. If Swift was a larger-than-life figure, both in literary and public terms, Pope, if anything, had to be content with being smaller-than-life. To help understand Pope's attraction to the writing of satire, it is useful to look at the Roman writer Juvenal:

When a soft eunuch marries, and Mevia takes to sticking
a Tuscan boar, with a spear beside her naked breast,
when a fellow who made my stiff young beard crunch with his
clippers
can challenge the whole upper class with his millions, single-
handed;
when Crispinus, a blob of Nilotic scum, bred in Canópus,
hitches a cloak of Tyrian purple onto his shoulder
and flutters a simple ring of gold on his sweaty finger
(in summer he cannot bear the weight of a whole stone),
it's hard *not* to write satire.⁴

Here Juvenal chooses to attack individuals, but as with Pope's, his attacks are based around an ulterior satirical motive, in this case a justification of satire itself. Juvenal did not share Pope's inferiority complex (and this is corroborated by a comparison of their verse, where we find Juvenal looking down upon the masses, whereas Pope may look down upon individuals, but, despite a disgust at general social corruption, never puts himself above the populace), but they share the distaste for society which initiates the desire for satirical attack. In 1723, Pope writes despairingly to Broome: 'Every valuable, every pleasant thing is sunk in an ocean of avarice and corruption...so money upon money increases, copulates, and multiplies, and guineas beget guineas in *saecula saecularum*'⁵. This passage echoes some of the concepts in the Juvenal, with physical (that is, objects of value, or currency) as well as

⁴Juvenal, *The Satires* (Book 1 [Satires 1-5], c.112; Book 2 [Satire 6], c.117; Book 3 [Satires 7-9], c.121; Book 4 [Satires 10-12], c.125; Book 5 [Satires 13-16], c.130), trans. Niall Rudd (World's Classics, Oxford, 1992), i.22-30.

⁵Pope to Broome, 14 July 1723; *Correspondence*, ii.176.

abstract representations of human greed, and the litany of corruption, building up and multiplying, avarice begetting avarice, corrupt power begetting corrupt power, and so forth. Also inherent in both Juvenal's and Pope's attitudes to writing satire is a resignation, a feeling that the satirist is meant to indicate faults, and apportion praise and blame where it is due, but not to actually interfere with the social mechanism beyond this. In this sense, Pope takes his place in a line of traditional satirists who sometimes heckle from the sidelines, but do not step into the fray. Swift attempts to transcend this line of tradition.

Writing to L'Abbé des Fontaines, the French translator of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Swift demurs at the former's intention to omit from his translation those passages which he feels are irrelevant to French society:

The same vices and the same follies reign everywhere; at least, in all the civilized countries of Europe: and the author who writes only for a city, a province, a kingdom, or even an age, warrants so little to be translated, that he deserves not even to be read.⁶

Swift felt the literary urge to step out of the restrictions of purely topical satire in a way which Pope only occasionally emulates, as he does, for example, in his work of 'philosophical poetry', *An Essay on Man* (written 1730-2, published 1733-4), and he (that is, Swift) recognized the importance of this breaking of the ideological, shackles of an age most clearly of the two writers. When Swift attacks topical examples of corruption in his writing, it is in the nature of a direct engagement with the problem, a searching for a solution and a desire to supply the means by which to apply that solution. Pope suggests abstract ethical solutions to humanity's dilemmas, but when faced with individual problems he tends to criticize, but make no attempt to solve.

Swift, then, must be acknowledged as the 'active' satirist, the man who attempts to change society rather than simply point out its flaws for the attention of others. However, in order to assume this role he is often forced to disregard an important aspect of his ideological structure: his humanity. When he is intent upon correcting the difficulties of mankind, Swift becomes a transcendent being, in his own mind at least. Turning again to the letter to Pope in November 1725, we see Swift protesting against the impression that he hates humanity, it is simply that he does not see himself as part of their species:

I tell you after all that I do not hate Mankind, it is vous autres who hate them because you would have them reasonable Animals, and are Angry

⁶Swift to L'Abbé des Fontaines, July 1727; *Correspondence*, iii.225-6.

for being disappointed. I have always rejected that Definition and made another of my own. I am no more angry with ----- Then I was with the kite that last week flew away with one of my Chickins and yet I was pleas'd when one of my Servants Shot him two days after...⁷

The offhand, slightly flippant tone of this passage, interspersed with chummy French phrases, signals to us that Swift has his tongue some way into his cheek, and as we shall see on examination of *Gulliver's Travels* and *A Modest Proposal* (1729), he is capable of intricate interplay with questions of human identity and the nature of humanity. However, there is always the tension in Swift that arises from his tendency to place himself in a morally transcendent and paradigmatic role. Writing to Thomas Sheridan, also in 1725, Swift encourages his friend to treat the masses with as little emotion or expectation as possible: '...Therefore sit down and be quiet, and mind your Business as you should do, and contract your Friendships, and expect no more from Man than he is capable of, and you will every day find my description of yahoos more resembling⁸. The sentiments expressed here are very similar to some of the sentiments expressed by Pope in *An Essay on Man*, but Swift's letter has the marked difference of placing its author outside the sphere of common humanity, while Pope continues to rail from the inside. Pope's coterie of friends would exist separate from and yet inside the general social system, while Swift's would transcend it.

In this essay, I shall investigate the way in which Pope and Swift attempt to use expressions of misanthropy in their writing as satirical tools, and where the use of misanthropy becomes instead an expression of bile and invective, I shall attempt to identify the causes of this descent and the resulting effect on the structure of the work which contains it. I wish to compare the ideologies of the two writers, exploring their self-perception in relation to the rest of humanity, and their attempts to manipulate social structures to fit their own blueprint. As Swift emerges as a man of involvement in worldly affairs, with Pope commenting from the wings, I hope to assess the impact of their satire, both from an eighteenth century and a modern perspective, and ultimately to attempt to present their use of misanthropic attitudes in its true light, either as haters of humanity, or as satirically harsh, but morally justified healers of it.

⁷Swift to Pope, 26 November 1725; *ibid.*

⁸Swift to Reverend Thomas Sheridan, 11 September 1725; *Correspondence*, iii. 93-5.

CHAPTER I: INDIVIDUALS AND THE MASS

1. A Misanthropic Agenda

On 29 September 1725, Jonathan Swift wrote a letter to his friend Alexander Pope which contained the following exhortatory passage:

I have ever hated all Nations Professions and Communityes and all my love is towards individualls for instance I hate the tribe of Lawyers, but I love a Councillor such a one, Judge such a one for so with Physicians (I will not speak of my own Trade) Soldiers, Scotch, French; and the rest but principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I hartily love John, Peter, Thomas and so forth. this is the system upon which I have governed my self many years (but do not tell) and so I shall go on till I have done with them I have got Materials Towards a Treatis proving the Falsity of that Definition *animal rationale*; and to show it should be only *rationis capax*. Upon this great foundation of Misanthropy (though not Timons manner) The whole building of my Travells is erected: And I never will have peace of mind till all honest men are of my Opinion: by Consequence you are to embrace it immediately and procure that all who desire my Esteem may do so too. The matter is so clear that it will admit little dispute. nay I will hold a hundred pounds that you and I agree in this Point...⁹

Swift is already beginning to build a manifesto for his misanthropic coterie, and he shows a willingness to flatter as the elect those whom he wishes to join him there, somehow distinguished from the mass, if only because they may be considered 'honest'. A contradiction worth noting is that Swift himself seems to hate all other coterie: 'Nations', 'Professions' and 'Communityes' all meet with his disapprobation, so it is clearly not just 'man' which he detests, but 'man' when he is organized by a social structure, be it on the comparatively small scale of a profession, or the vast one of a nation. Swift's intense dislike of these institutions seems also to be linked with a fear of their power; his desire to be attached to the Church of England, and his actual attachment to the Church of Ireland, not to mention the desire for a collection of like-minded individuals, refutes the possibility that he hated institutions absolutely. When he claims to detest 'that animal called man' in general, he is in fact more resentful of man's unstoppable desire to build social structures, many of which may possess opinions opposed to those of Swift himself, plus the power to implement them. When the institution to which he is attached, and which most comprehensively represents his beliefs, cannot be pre-eminent, or is somehow subject to internecine

⁹Swift to Pope, 29 September 1725; iii.102-3.

corruption, Swift evinces a tendency to retreat within a miniature society of his own making, where there are no opposing institutions, because this whole society comprises the institution to which he himself belongs.

Swift's desire to prove that man is only capable of reason, *rationis capax*, and not necessarily a reasoning animal, is another example of his wish to retreat from a socially constructed system once he believes that it is not going to allow him victory. If Swift can prove that the people who disagree with him are not operating within a rational system of thought, and that he is, he can argue that he is in the superior position almost regardless of what is being discussed; a rational system of thought is inherently superior to an irrational one. Also, if this were to be judged to be the case, Swift would have every justification in opting out of an irrational society. Again, the conclusion of this passage may be construed as Swift having his tongue-in-cheek, and without doubt he is to some extent parodying his own position, especially when he demands that, in effect, all who require his attention must first acknowledge that he is correct. However, the essence of the passage runs throughout Swift's writings: that is, he believes that a definite line may be drawn between those whom he regards as rational (those who agree with him) and those he does not. The first building blocks of Swift's misanthropy are a product of this belief that he can identify those individuals worthy of his attention, and disregard the rest.

The clearest example of Pope's misanthropic agenda in his writing may be found in his poem of 1716, 'To Mr. John Moore, Author of the Celebrated Worm-Powder'. The main message of the poem is clear within a few lines:

How much, egregious *Moor*, are we
Deceived by Shews and Forms!
Whate'er we think, whate'er we see,
All humankind are Worms.

Man is a very Worm by Birth,
Vile Reptile, weak, and vain!
A while he crawls upon the Earth,
Then shrinks to Earth again.¹⁰

It is significant that Pope is writing in the context of a popular advertising campaign, which would be familiar to a contemporary readership (although what Pope's publishing intentions were is not clear - the poem was published piratically the year it was written); Pope is trying to emphasize that a creature which conventional opinion believes to be beneath humankind is, in fact, different only in a superficial

¹⁰Alexander Pope, 'To Mr. John Moore, Author of the Celebrated Worm-Powder' (written and published [piratically] 1716); pp.298-9 in Alexander Pope, *The Poems of Alexander Pope: A One Volume Edition of the Twickenham Pope*, ed. John Butt (Routledge, London, 1963), ll.1-8.

sense, 'Shews and Forms'. Pope goes on to denounce 'woman', 'The Learn'd', 'The Fops', 'The Flatterer', 'Statesmen', all as worm-kind, much in the same way that Swift denounces types and races in his letter (above), although Pope goes so far as to trace the lineage back to the 'devil' himself (although again, Swift employs this device fulsomely in some of his poetic attacks on individuals, for which see below). The parallel with insect-life is opened up by Pope in the final three stanzas:

Ah *Moore*! thy Skill were well employ'd,
And greater Gain would rise,
If thou could'st make the Courtier void
The Worm that never dies!

O learned friend of *Abchurch-Lane*,
Who sett'st our Entrails free!
Vain is thy Art, thy Powder vain,
Since Worms shall eat ev'n thee.

Our Fate thou can'st adjourn
Some few short Years, no more!
Ev'n *Button's* Wits to Worms shall turn,
Who Maggots were before.¹¹

Pope extends the metaphor in the third last stanza by identifying a common target for social satire, the 'Courtier', as a parasite, showing again the ridiculousness of regarding worms as corrupt in relation to a society which has greater intrinsic corruption. Moore's superfluity comes under direct attack when the poet points out at l.34 that he can only be useful to us after death ('Who sett'st our Entrails free!'), and therefore cannot improve a living society. In any case, Pope continues, Moore's efforts are 'vain', as he himself shall soon be food for worms, in a final irony unable to dispel in death what he scourged in life.

What is clearly different to Swift's approach is that Pope does not attempt to separate himself from the masses he is condemning. 'All Humankind are Worms!' he asserts at the beginning of the poem, and when he chooses to mention '*Button's* Wits' at its conclusion he is not simply making another sniping attack (although he *is* doing that), he is also bringing his own world, and consequently himself, within the compass of the poem. Mentioning these individuals, and locations such as '*Abchurch-Lane*', ground the poem in Pope's time and his own social and physical environment, and effectively allows him to use his own situation as one of the examples which prove the universal rule. Where Swift pulls back and examines humanity as if he were poking a particularly disgusting beetle (or, indeed, worm) under a microscope, Pope

¹¹Pope, 'Worm-Powder'; *ibid.*, ll.29-40.

actually wants to be considered part of the mass in this respect; for someone so frequently denounced as sub-human, and regularly compared to insect life himself, Pope may well have found it a gratifying relief to allow himself moral parity with his contemporaries. Writing to Hugh Bethel in 1742, we find Pope expressing very similar sentiments regarding his own relationship with mankind, to those Swift was expressing in the letter to him seventeen years earlier:

Worthy Men are, & must be friends, where-ever they meet with one another, in spite of all distinctions of party or religion. There are some in all Countries; the wonder is to find any in any Courts; but I believe that there may be more in the Courts of unhappy, than of prosperous princes. In your own country, I can assure you with sorrow, they daily decrease, or change from good to bad, which is worse; I protest I can scarce name you any, for whose sake it would be worth your while to leave your Doctor; but could I name one such in this Profession, and one in every other Profession, I should think England the new Jerusalem.¹²

Pope does not seem as concerned as Swift with dividing society into its various institutions, but instead takes a broader view; in 'Worms', he cordons off the factions of character types as 'Fops', 'Flatterers', etc., but then unites them under the banner of commonly flawed and corrupt humanity. In this letter to Bethel, he takes an overview first of the whole of mankind, and then of the society with which he is familiar. Like Swift, Pope longs for connection with other like-minded individuals, but he is not so urgently desirous of separating these men from the rest of humanity. When Pope searches for "Worthy" men, he is also trying to alter and improve his own social environment, not through his own efforts, but by his perception of the efforts of others.

2. Defending the Many By Attacking the Few

Both Swift and Pope suffer the persecution of the time and place in which they find themselves, but Pope is more deeply rooted in this immediacy than his counterpart. Swift's capacity to free himself ideologically from social patterns and identification with his fellow man allows a greater venom to enter his social attacks, and, as Robert Kilburn Root explains, "Pope's satire, even when actuated solely by indignation at public wrong, stops short of the devastating bitterness, the *sæva indignatio*, aroused in the soul of Swift by the evil and corruption which he saw in all the social relations

¹²Pope to Hugh Bethel, 1742; *Correspondence*, iv.414-15.

of mankind'¹³. Swift's misanthropic 'bitterness' is rendered more potent in some ways by the absolute nature of his general condemnation of mankind, but when he is dealing with reality as opposed to setting out his own ethical agenda, his most effective use of satirical misanthropy may be seen in his singling out of the individual. Paradoxically, however, when we see Swift's ability to raise himself above the common standard and heap opprobrium upon the head of some unfortunate individual (a position which is ostensibly morally inferior to that of Pope, who counts himself among the commonalty, and includes himself in any condemnation of that commonalty), he often raises his own status in terms of how society perceives him. *The Drapier's Letters* (1724-5) is a case in point.

Swift employs a number of simple, yet highly effective techniques when he wishes to destroy an enemy through an intense attack upon an individual. In his writings upon the *Wood's Half-Pence* affair in Ireland in the mid-1720s, the figure of William Wood became a synecdochic representative of English oppression of the Irish people. At the same time, Swift was able to double the effectiveness of the attack by refusing to allow Wood to share the blame with his colleagues in authority:

I should never have done if I were to tell you all the Miseries that we shall undergo if we be so *Foolish* and *Wicked* as to take this CURSED COYN. It would be very hard if *Ireland* should be put into *One Scale*, and *this sorry Fellow WOODS* into the other, that Mr. *WOODS* should weigh down *this whole Kingdom*, by which *England* gets above a Million of good Money every Year clear into their *Pockets*, and that is more than the *English* do by *all the World besides*.¹⁴

While Swift is clearly implying that England is to blame for orchestrating the half-pence scheme, he cleverly alters the reality of the situation (that is, that Wood is both a user *and* a tool of the English government) by rhetorically manipulating Wood to the position of competitor with the Irish nation for the service of the English. Wood (often mis-referred to as 'Woods' by Swift, another indication of slight regard for Wood's merits and importance) is portrayed as an unworthy servant who does not pull his weight, but is none the less inexplicably favoured by his master. Swift firstly exhorts the Irish people themselves not to accept the 'CURSED COYN', and then turns his attention to the English, always with the intention that the pressure of

¹³Robert Kilburn Root, *The Poetical Career of Alexander Pope* (Princeton University Press, 1938), p.193.

¹⁴Jonathan Swift, 'To the Tradesmen, Shop-Keepers, Farmers and Common-People in General, of the Kingdom of Ireland' in Jonathan Swift, *The Drapier's Letters to the People of Ireland Against Receiving Wood's Halfpence* (published collectively 1735, ed. Herbert Davis, Oxford University Press, 1935), p.10.

disapproval be focused upon Wood by both sides. In this way, Swift attempts to get the English government to turn damaging attention upon its weakest link, despite the fact that this link was approved by the English in the first place.

In the letter which he addresses to his printer, Harding (who was fatally imprisoned as a result of the affair of Wood's halfpence), Swift again focuses on the insignificance of Wood in comparison with the amount of damage he is doing:

First, observe this little Impudent *Hardware Man* turning into ridicule *the Direful Apprehensions of a whole Kingdom*, priding himself as the Cause of them, and daring to prescribe what no King of *England* ever attempted, how far a whole Nation shall be obliged to take his Brass Coyn. And he has Reason to Insult; for sure there was never an Example in History, of a great Kingdom kept in Awe for above a Year in daily dread of utter Destruction, not by a powerful invader at the Head of Twenty Thousand Men, not by a Plague or a Famine, not by a Tyrannical Prince (for we never had one more Gracious) or a corrupt Administration, but by one single, diminutive, insignificant, Mechanick.¹⁵

Again, Swift turns his bile away from English authority ('we never had [a Prince] more Gracious') and towards Wood. By portraying him as a 'little Impudent *Hardware Man*', Swift can convey to the Irish working classes the idea that they are being attacked by one of their own kind, albeit an Englishman, which can only add to their righteous indignation. Swift will not even permit Wood the image of amoral entrepreneur, but makes him out to be a vicious destroyer of history, tradition and modern Irish livelihood, 'priding himself' on his ability to cause a nation to fear for its safety. The melodramatic and elaborate language which Swift uses in this passage increases the contrast between Wood himself and the enormity of the effect he has on Ireland.

Swift also made liberal use of his skills as poet to feed the culture of Wood-hating. In 'A Serious Poem upon William Wood' (written and published 1724), Swift portrays his subject as a symbol of true evil:

The heathens, we read, had gods made of wood,
Who could do them no harm, if they did them no good:
But this idol Wood may do us great evil,
Their gods were of wood, but our Wood is the devil:
To cut down fine wood is a very bad thing,
And yet we all know how much gold it will bring,
Then if cutting down Wood brings money good store,

¹⁵Jonathan Swift, 'A Letter to Mr. Harding the Printer, Upon Occasion of a Paragraph in his Newspaper of August 1st Relating to Mr. Wood's Half-pence' in Swift, *Drapier's Letters*, pp.23-4.

Our money to keep, let us cut down one more.¹⁶

Swift again makes use of his customary flippant satirical tone, but there is, as the title states with double-edged irony, something serious going on here. Wood was a disreputable character in the early eighteenth century and was widely believed to have obtained his patent by bribery, but Swift denies him his genuine, if highly dubious, identity, and instead chooses to cast his character in such a dark light that those who knew him would not recognize him. No attempt to mitigate Wood's evil qualities is ever made by Swift, but the confusion lies in the fact that Wood is perpetually empowered and ridiculed in turn by the writing. Wood is 'the devil', an entity of pure evil, and yet he is also made to seem a pathetic, laughable figure. When Swift makes Wood a figure of power, he also wishes to make it clear that, as well as the English government, it is Ireland's submissiveness which supplies this power, and Ireland that may take it away again. In another poem on the subject, 'Wood, An Insect' (written 1725, published 1735) - note the use of insect life as a tool of misanthropic satire once more - this can be seen even more clearly:

The louse of the wood for a medicine is used,
Or swallowed alive, or skilfully bruised.
And let but our mother Hibernia contrive
To swallow Will Wood either bruised or alive.
She need be no more with the jaundice possessed;
Or sick of obstructions, and pains in her chest.¹⁷

Swift has divided his rhetorical image of Wood up into three types of 'insect', thus multiplying his ridiculousness and insignificance, while highlighting the multifaceted nature of his moral poisonousness at the same time. He also shows Ireland - 'Hibernia' - once again as the much more worthy and significant entity which is allowing Wood to live off her as a parasite. This urging of the Irish people to reject Wood and everything connected with him reaches an almost demagogic fervour at times, and if we return to the *Drapier's Letters*, we can find examples of Swift attempting to instigate what virtually amounts to a witch-hunt:

When the *Evil Day* is come (if it must come) let us mark and observe
those who presume to offer these Half-Pence in Payment. Let their
Names, and Trades, and Places of Abroad be made Publick, that every one

¹⁶Jonathan Swift, 'A Serious Poem upon William Wood: Brazier, Tinker, Hardware-Man, Coiner, Counterfeiter, Founder and Esquire' (written and published 1724); p.273-6 in Jonathan Swift, *The Complete Poems*, ed. Pat Rogers (Penguin Classics, London, 1983), II.9-16.

¹⁷Jonathan Swift, 'Wood, An Insect' (written 1725, published 1735); pp.287-8 in Swift, *Poems*, II.11-16.

may be aware of them, as Betrayers of their Country, and Confederates with Mr. *Woods*. Let them be watched at Markets and Fairs, and let the first honest Discoverer give the Word about, that *Woods's* Half pence have been offered, and caution the poor innocent People not to receive them.¹⁸

The letters succeeded in their aim of vilifying Wood, and as he became established in the public consciousness as a figure of evil, effigies of him were burnt in the streets of Dublin. One important question that this episode gives rise to is whether the depth and vehemence of the misanthropic invective directed against Wood in the letters dictates a compromise of Swift's appointed role as clergyman by his role as patriot and satirist. One might agree with Oliver W. Ferguson when he claims that 'Wood is almost as convenient a device for Swift as is the persona of the Drapier'¹⁹; Swift certainly makes use of his own version of Wood's character very effectively in the letters, but one cannot place the treatment of the 'little Hardware Man' entirely in a rhetorical context - the writer was too fiercely engaged with reality to allow for that. Swift was initially attempting to conceal his identity when he began to write and publish the letters, and his adoption of the pseudonym 'M.B. Drapier' shows his intentions as regards the projected origin of the writing. Swift wanted them to appear to be the work of a skilled political thinker ('M.B.' was short for 'Marcus Brutus', the great Roman orator), but also to be representative of the Irish working classes, hence 'Drapier', a common tradesman. Swift seems to have done his best to distance himself from the letters at first, trying to propagate them as an embodiment of the spirit of the working people of Ireland. However, once they began to have the desired effect, Swift became associated more and more strongly with the figure of the Drapier, until he was eventually obliged to come forward in public and take his bows.

With the acknowledgement of his authorship of *The Drapier's Letters*, Swift also accepted moral responsibility for their content. As a rhetorical exercise, they certainly make exemplary use of misanthropy as a satirical tool, but in the fierceness of their invective and the violence of their imagery, they must be seen as tarnishing Swift's moral status. Swift begins his project by using Wood as a synecdochic representative of the English government, but soon the desire to see the end of his selected opponent reaches eschatological proportions:

¹⁸Swift, 'Letter to Mr. Harding' in Swift, *Drapier's Letters*, p.29.

¹⁹Oliver W. Ferguson, *Jonathan Swift and Ireland* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1962), p.105.

I have heard Scholars talk of a Man who told a King that he had invented a Way to torment People by putting them into a Bull of Brass with Fire under it, but the Prince put the Projector first into his own Brazen Bull to make the Experiment; this very much resembles the project of Mr. WOODS, and the like of this may possibly be Mr. WOODS's Fate, that the Brass he contrived to torment this Kingdom with, may prove his own Torment, and his destruction at last.²⁰

Wood himself may have been a very worthy target for opprobrium, but in the course of the letters, Swift's rhetorical techniques actually intensify the strength of pure invective in the writing. By setting up the Drapier and Wood as symbolic figures, the former representing Irish goodness and the latter English corruption and evil, Swift allows himself the opportunity to pour invective and hatred on - and, more importantly, to incite hatred against - the figure of Wood, without actually being seen to be venting his own spleen. The misanthropic sentiments cannot be the Drapier's, because he is an imaginary figure; they are Swift's, but because the presentation of the battle has been rhetorically simplified into good versus evil, it does not seem like invective, but a harsh-but-fair attack on corruption. What the device of M.B. Drapier and the re-invention of Wood allow Swift to do is to deliver his round of hatred against the enemy more efficiently than a formal political tract, accredited to him from the outset; he can then walk away from the argument, returning at will at later intervals to visit further blows upon Wood, providing only an imaginary opponent to whom his enemy can address no riposte. The rhetorical skill with which Swift executes his satire is supreme, but his personal integrity cannot avoid at least a degree of jeopardy here: he attacks the individual to protect the many, but the invective used in these attacks at times draws upon a source of anger and frustration deep within Swift's psyche which must be acknowledged as a force that conflicts with his role as guardian of justice and morality, even as he attempts to use that force for good.

Swift is most likely to resort to this technique of singling out an individual for lampoonery and anthematization when he is attempting to deal with the social and political problems of his own time in a direct fashion. Peter Dixon traces a similar trend in Pope's writing:

In the poems of the early 1730s Pope speaks both for and against his age. The 'visible diurnal sphere' at once provokes him to satire and provides him with patterns of those very qualities, aesthetic, social, and moral, which the objects of his satires signally lack. If he condemns Cloe and Timon and Peter Walter, he writes with an opposite but equal warmth on behalf of Martha Blount, Lord Burlington, and John Kyrle. Hence the note of authority in his poetry, its characteristic air of confidence; true

²⁰Swift, 'To the Tradesmen' in *Drapier's Letters*, p.15.

standards and values are demonstrably being upheld by a select circle which includes the poet and his friends.²¹

These poems show a confidence that Pope, like Swift, gains from knowing where he stands in society, who are his allies and who his foes; Pope sees himself as an upholder of virtue, but it is also incumbent upon him to praise good whenever he perceives it. Where he comes onto less steady ground is when he attempts to reconcile this strict moral code with a desire to form a universal ethical system which is applicable to the whole of mankind, including himself. In *An Essay on Man*, Pope posits the necessity of man's self-abnegation in favour of a universal system:

In Pride, in reas'ning Pride, our error lies;
All quit their sphere, and rush into the skies.
Pride still is aiming at the blest abodes,
Men would be Angels, Angels would be Gods.
Aspiring to be Gods, if Angels fell,
Aspiring to be Angels, Men rebel;
And who but wishes to invert the laws
Of ORDER, sins against th'Eternal Cause.²²

There is still a confidence in the narrative voice in these lines because Pope is certain that the position he describes is the result of careful internal debate and a standpoint which is informed by moral rectitude. Unfortunately, there are problems with Pope's eagerness to establish a universal order in this fashion. Although Pope is by no means consciously aiming to join the angels, he regularly claims, as we have seen, that he would like nothing more than to 'banish the World' and join those who 'quit their sphere, and rush into the skies'. The result of this desire is that intellectuals such as Pope and Swift create two parallel hierarchies in their personal ideologies: in one, the traditional idea of an eighteenth century religious hierarchy, as Pope describes here in this passage from the *Essay on Man*, with God at the top, Angels next, and man coming several rungs further down; in the other, Pope, Swift, and their coterie of friends are at the top, looking down at the ignorant masses. The first hierarchy is what Pope and (to a lesser extent) Swift state they want to follow, and in their spiritual lives it is fair to say that to a certain extent it is what they strive towards. However, in their intellectual lives and their mundane emotional existence, it is the second hierarchy which dominates, the hierarchy of misanthropy.

²¹Peter Dixon, *The World of Pope's Satires: An Introduction to the 'Epistles' and 'Imitations of Horace'* (Methuen & Co, London, 1968), p.3.

²²Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man* (written 1730-2, published 1733-4); pp.501-47 in Pope, *Poems*, i.123-30.

The *Essay on Man* contains more than one paradox worth investigating. It has the confident tone which Peter Dixon mentions (above), and sometimes this becomes fiercely didactic. At other moments, however, we see Pope at his most humble, as far from the misanthropic god looking down on an inferior humanity as we could hope for. In Epistle IV, for instance, we find the poet keen to acknowledge the necessity of companionship:

There's not a blessing Individuals find,
But some way leans and hearkens to the kind.
No Bandit fierce, no tyrant mad with pride,
No cavern'd Hermit, rests self-satisfy'd.
Who most to shun or hate Mankind pretend,
Seek an admirer, or would fix a friend.
Abstract what others feel, what others think,
All pleasures sicken, and all glories sink;
Each has his share; and who would more obtain,
Shall find, the pleasure pays not half the pain.²³

Not ostensibly the sentiments one might expect to be most readily expressed by a misanthropist; Pope seems here to be fully convinced of the rightness of social unity and the necessity of maintaining close contact with the outside world. However, it is the ideal society, made in his own Tory image, that Pope wants contact with, not the reality with which he is confronted; the urge to 'fix a friend', we must remember, is also an integral part of forming a coterie. When Pope sees himself as a being who should dissolve among the masses, there is not the same urgent need to bond with those with whom he most closely identifies (cf. letter to Hugh Bethel, above). The experience of friendship, an especially intense state of communication between individuals, is heightened by the coterie situation, when the feeling of being opposed from without binds those within more closely. Pope's words to those who 'to shun or hate Mankind pretend' ring true, but that does not necessarily make them incompatible with a misanthropic standpoint; the intensity of Swift's and Pope's friendship grew in the face of continued social and political rejection, as much of their mutual correspondence testifies, and they retreated inwards, into these havens of private amity, when their involvement with society became problematic.

Examples of rhetorical misanthropy in the *Essay* are not as easy to identify and categorize as in some of Pope's other compositions, but, once identified, they reward closer examination. A well-known example, one around which an important part of the *Essay*'s argument is built, comes in Epistle II:

²³Pope, *An Essay on Man*, iv.39-48.

Go, wond'rous creature! mount where Science guides,
 Go, measure earth, weigh air, and state the tides;
 Instruct the planets in what orbs to run,
 Correct old Time, and regulate the Sun;
 Go, soar with Plato to th'empyrean sphere,
 To the first good, first perfect, and first fair;
 Or tread the mazy round his follow'rs trod,
 And quitting sense call imitating God;
 As Eastern priests in giddy circles run,
 And turn their heads to imitate the Sun.
 Go, teach Eternal Wisdom how to rule—
 Then drop into thyself, and be a fool!

Superior beings, when of late they saw
 A mortal Man unfold all Nature's law,
 Admir'd such wisdom in an earthly shape,
 And shew'd a NEWTON as we shew an APE.²⁴

The rhetorical misanthropy used here is both subtle and structured. Pope brings forth the image of Newton at the end of this section of verse, and in so doing acknowledges this individual's pre-eminent position in scientific history and in contemporary society. The structure which Pope builds around this acknowledgement of Newton's status then allows him to apply a cutting piece of misanthropic rhetoric: Pope places the image of Newton, as a representative of human intellectual achievement at its most exalted level, within the universal hierarchy to which he refers elsewhere in the *Essay*. With Newton reduced to an inferior by the scale that contains the 'Superior beings', Pope ensures that we are forced to re-examine our own perceived position in the universe. The double-edged technique of this rhetorical misanthropy is exceptionally well utilized, albeit within a frequently questioned philosophical structure: while Pope acknowledges the greatness of human achievement, and the pre-eminence of figures such as Plato and Newton among their fellows, he then uses these figures to ridicule the attempts of humanity to impose its own desire upon nature, and to 'teach Eternal Wisdom how to rule'. Pope's contempt is aimed not at those who strive to achieve greatness or to advance understanding and knowledge within a human sphere, but acts as a needle, bursting the swelling balloon of egotism which represents mankind's aspirations to understand Divine ways. To the higher powers, Pope suggests, we are merely, even in our greatest achievements, performing an intellectual task which is, to them, infinitely simple: attaining a fundamental knowledge of those aspects of nature which we are able to perceive, is nothing compared with creating nature itself. Pope develops a structure within this passage of verse which attacks not individuals, nor

²⁴Pope, *An Essay on Man*, ii.19-34.

the achievements of individuals, but the attitude which arrogates a power of comprehension, which Pope believes to exist utterly beyond human capacity, as a result of these achievements being made.

3. The Misanthropist's Search For A Society: *Gulliver's Travels*

Swift uses a similar device in *Part IV* of *Gulliver's Travels*; he starts with a comparison of human and Yahoo life:

...some small pittance of *Reason* had fallen, whereof we made no other use than by its assistance to aggravate our *natural* corruptions, and to acquire new ones which Nature had not given us. That we disarmed ourselves of the few abilities she had bestowed, had been very successful in multiplying our original wants, and seemed to spend our lives in vain endeavours to supply them by our own inventions. That as to myself, it was manifest I had neither the strength or agility of a common Yahoo, that I walked infirmly on my hinder feet, had found out a contrivance to make my claws of no use or defence, and to remove the hair from my chin, which was intended as a shelter from the sun and then weather. Lastly, that I could neither run with speed, nor climb trees like my *brethren* (as he called them) the Yahoos in this country.²⁵

As Pope does in *An Essay on Man*, Swift berates mankind for attempting to make too much of its intellect, which was never its strongest suit in any case. The two writers seem to be assuming what would today be regarded as an anti-evolutionary stance, criticizing humanity's progress from a foraging quadruped to a 'civilized' biped, who has foolishly disregarded all its natural assets for a doomed trip to 'th'empyrean sphere'. If we look back at Swift's letter to Pope of 26 November 1725, quoted above, we can see that Swift is happy to look upon humanity as another species, an inferior one that may be put to use if rendered servile and unlikely to attempt ridiculous and illogical self-improvement. This type of self-contradiction in ideology and practice runs throughout literary history; a good modern comparison would be D.H. Lawrence, whose proclamations of the superiority of the educated man in relation to the ignorant labourer being much greater than that of the labourer in relation to his horse are a similar betrayal of egalitarian ethics. Swift strove to make himself intelligible to the common man, and often fought on his behalf, as we have seen, but could not eradicate the feelings of disgust at humanity's corruption. He does not confine his revulsion to the ignorant, however; in fact, like Pope, and as the comparison between Gulliver and the Yahoos illustrates, he saw the advantages

²⁵Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726; reprinted Penguin Classics, London, 1967), p.306.

of maintaining the ignorance of the useful labouring beast. Nevertheless, the description of Gulliver's attempts to integrate himself with the Yahoos is ambivalent:

And I have reason to believe they had some imagination that I was one of their species, which I often assisted myself, by stripping up my sleeves, and showing my naked arms and breast in their sight, when my protector was with me. At which time they would approach as near as they durst, and imitate my actions after the manner of monkeys, but ever with great signs of hatred, as a tame *jackdaw*, with cap and stockings, is always persecuted by the wild ones, when he happens to be got among them.²⁶

Swift shows the hatred that the softening and refining process of education and general civilization engenders in those who have not undergone it. However, he seems to show sympathy for Gulliver's plight at the same time that he mocks it; like the tame jackdaw, Gulliver has been moulded by his own society into the inadequate creature which the Yahoos detest, and as the process cannot be reversed, he has no option but to continue the refining process towards the rarefied state of the Houyhnhnms. The Houyhnhnms, unfortunately, do not make a realistic paradigm:

Friendship and benevolence are the two principal virtues among the Houyhnhnms, and these are not confined to particular objects, but universal to the whole race. For a stranger from the remotest part is equally treated with the nearest neighbour, and wherever he goes, looks upon himself as at home. They preserve *decency* and *civility* in the highest degrees, but are altogether ignorant of *ceremony*. They have no fondness for their colts and foals, but the care they take in educating them proceedeth entirely from the dictates of *Reason*. And I observed my master to show the same affection to his neighbour's issue that he had for his own. They will have it that *Nature* teaches them to love the whole species, and it is *Reason* only that maketh a distinction of persons, where there is a superior degree of virtue.²⁷

A contemporary readership would have been even more alive to the irony of Swift's choice of a horse that can communicate in a conventional linguistic manner as his paradigm for logical behaviour: eighteenth century pamphlets on logic regularly used the *equus* as an example of the *rationis non capax* in opposition to man as *animal rationale*. For the modern reader as well, however, it is obvious that there is something not right about the Houyhnhnms. They 'preserve *decency* and *civility* in the highest degrees, but are altogether ignorant of *ceremony*'; at first glance this makes them seem the ideal social animal, respectful of others, but unwilling to

²⁶Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, p.313.

²⁷Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, p.316.

countenance divisive hierarchies and unnecessary displays of decorum. However, when we arrive at a larger and more complex example of civilization, such as our own society, we find that 'ceremony' is a necessary part of human organization. It is by tradition and codes of social behaviour that we determine and recognize events of moral significance, setting standards for achievement and praising endeavour and moral rectitude; it is also the means by which we ensure (or, at least, attempt to ensure) that all the different members of society are treated equally. The Houyhnhnms treat all their citizens equally because there is no differentiation between individuals, they 'love' all the race equally; likewise, the only distinction that is made between members of the Houyhnhnm society in any other sense is that of 'degree of virtue', which may be earned by the individual. In a human society, where discrimination is made constantly on all manner of illogical bases, 'ceremony', or a gradually established code of behaviour, is essential for the maintenance of civilized life; it is unnecessary in the Houyhnhnm civilization only because they are an imaginary race that does not suffer from the build-up of 'irrational' destructive energy that is a concomitant of human life in communities - Swift acknowledges this by his implicit and ironic allusion to the *equus* motif.

Another factor in the Houyhnhnms being tacitly identified as unnatural in *Gulliver's Travels* is their isolation; they live in the company of only one other species of any significance, the Yahoos, and are able to harness the latter's energies to a certain extent. In effect, the Houyhnhnms practice an enslavement policy that works to their advantage, and yet does not engender any concupiscence because their rational minds do not recognize such an illogical emotional reaction. That the Houyhnhnms would grow to such a level of sophistication while the Yahoos remained in a more or less primitive and unevolved state is unlikely, especially when Gulliver is brought onto the scene and we are able to compare him with his 'brethren'. Gulliver admires the cold and detached rationale of the Houyhnhnms; what he does not recognize, as Swift does, is that this approach may work in a small and unthreatened civilization, but in a realistic situation, with a large and diverse population, it would become impracticable. In the Houyhnhnm episode, Swift is on the side of the Yahoos; they are filthy and disgusting, but they represent the reality of human corruption, and their strength lies in the fact that they do not seek to question their own corruption. Gulliver is rejected by the Yahoos because he strives to become like a Houyhnhnm - when he undresses in an attempt to show the Yahoos that he is physically similar to them, he also exposes his own contemptible vulnerability, which he will only reveal in the presence of his Houyhnhnm 'protector'. Like Pope in *An Essay on Man*, then, Swift encourages the masses to remain, like the Yahoos, within the bounds that (he believes) their intellectual and emotional capacities dictate. However, he does not offer an all-encompassing hierarchy in

solution as Pope does, but instead chooses to use a hierarchical system to show the impossibility of humanity attaining the cold state of logical certainty which the Houyhnhnms have. Gulliver may admire and attempt to imitate the ways of the Houyhnhnms, but he still points out to us the essential element of emotional discrimination which is absent from their perfectly ordered social system when he asserts that he 'often heard the sorrel nag (who always loved me) crying out, *Hnmy illa nyha maiah Yahoo*, Take care of thyself, gentle Yahoo'²⁸.

For all his admiration and emulation of Houyhnhnm ways, he still longs to project human emotion onto the cold logicity of the Houyhnhnm image. In effect, Swift is highlighting the fact that while the Yahoos may be humanity in all its grotesque corruption, at least they have passion and emotional energy; without these, humanity does not become an improved species, it becomes something else entirely, hence the horse form - Swift wanted something strikingly different to humanity in appearance. In attempting to imitate the Houyhnhnms, an impossible and unnatural (ironically claiming to follow the dictates of nature) 'ideal', Gulliver becomes more greatly debased than the Yahoos, whom Swift allows to retain a purity in their violence.

Gulliver is an individual traveller who is continuously joining and leaving different societies in the course of the novel. What Swift makes clear is that, although he has heavy preconceptions brought about by social contact before he has embarked on the voyages in the novel, Gulliver is also suggestible. At the conclusion of his voyages, we are aware that his experiences have made Gulliver into another person:

As soon as I entered the house, my wife took me in her arms, and kissed me, at which, having not been used to the touch of that odious animal for so many years, I fell in a swoon for almost an hour. At the time I am writing it is five years since my last return to England: during the first year I could not endure my wife or children in my presence, the very smell of them was intolerable, much less could I suffer them to eat in the same room. To this hour they dare not presume to touch my bread, or drink out of the same cup, neither was I ever able to let one of them take me by the hand. The first money I laid out was to buy two young stone-horses, which I keep in a good stable, and next to them the groom is my greatest favourite; for I feel my spirits revived by the smell he contracts in the stable. My horses understand me tolerably well; I converse with them at least four hours every day. They are strangers to bridle or saddle, they live in great amity with me, and friendship to each other.²⁹

²⁸Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, p.332.

²⁹Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, p.339.

This is clearly Swift satirizing misanthropy, and, importantly, in the concluding phase of the novel; he extends the ironic *equus* motif to show how Gulliver's aspirations become insanity, when he lavishes affection and attention on the ridiculously inappropriate object of a horse, while ignoring, or even being repulsed by, his own family. As Gulliver reports his attempts to communicate with his horses, we are convinced of his madness. What Gulliver seems to have most vitally lost in his attempts to integrate into different societies, is the idea of his own position within the society from which he originated; in his aspirations to join the Brobdingnagians, or the Houyhnhnms, he has altered his perceptions to fit in with their unnatural perspective. Swift uses Gulliver as his control in the experiment of juxtaposing him with distortions and abstractions of human nature during the course of his travels, and Gulliver must suffer mentally and emotionally as he attempts to adapt to each different society, and is then removed from it, either by endeavour or circumstance. Swift seeks to remind mankind of the dangers of aspirations to ridiculous and unnatural heights, but, like Gulliver, he also wants to keep many aspects of mankind at arm's length. The corollary is that Swift may neither accept Gulliver and the humanity he represents, nor that of any of the races which he encounters, as the paradigm for a morally healthy existence; instead, Swift uses different aspects of the human condition as sign-posts *and* as warning signs for the direction which an unformed humanity, represented by Gulliver, should be taking.

When we examine the Lilliputian society, we discover that they, as with the Houyhnhnm society, have a social hierarchy which is based on their idea of virtue:

In choosing persons for all employments, they have more regard to good morals than to great abilities; for, since government is necessary to mankind, they believe that the common size of human understandings is fitted to some station or other, and that Providence never intended the management of public affairs a mystery, to be comprehended only by a few persons of sublime genius, of which there seldom are three born in an age; but, they suppose truth, justice, temperance, and the like, experience and a good intention, would qualify any man for the service of his country, except where a course of study is required.³⁰

The Lilliputians seem to be affording Swift his moral paradigm, but their size is telling us something; like the Houyhnhnms again, they are living inside an untouched universe, an environment where actions have much less significance than they would in a realistic society, where there is no such easily defined common aim. When Gulliver invades their world, we are met with two impressions: firstly, that the essence of Lilliputian morality is far stronger and more admirable than the essence of

³⁰Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, pp.95-6.

human morality, and secondly, that Lilliputian morality is the creation of a toy-sized world, which would be crushed by the force and size of social reality. If it is true that Swift wanted to show us the disgusting state of our own morality, it is also true that he wished to dispel any lingering notions of unrealistic idealism. The concept of virtues, good intentions, and application being all that is necessary for 'the management of public affairs' is an appealing one, but not one that Swift would be foolish enough to propose as an unmitigated solution to the ills of human society. The Brobdingnagian King's summing up of the British psyche makes an interesting comparison:

My little friend Grildrig; you have made a most admirable panegyric upon your country. You have clearly proved that ignorance, idleness, and vice are the proper ingredients for qualifying a legislator. That laws are best explained, interpreted, and applied by those whose interest and abilities lie in perverting, confounding, and eluding them. I observe among you some lines of an institution, which in its original might have been tolerable, but these half erased, and the rest wholly blurred and blotted by corruptions. It doth not appear from all you have said, how any one perfection is required towards the procurement of any one station among you, much less that men are ennobled on account of their virtue, that priests are advanced for their piety or learning, soldiers for their conduct or valour, judges for their integrity, senators for the love of their country, or counsellors for their wisdom. As for yourself (continued the King) who have spent the greatest part of your life in travelling, I am well disposed to hope you may hitherto have escaped many vices of your country. But, by what I have gathered from your own relation, and the answers I have with much pains wringed and extorted from you, I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives, to be the most pernicious race of odious little vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth.³¹

This speech contains much of Swift's thinking, which both adds and removes force from it in different ways. There is the familiar hatred and distrust of institutions, and the litany of denunciation of various ones, which echoes the letter to Pope of 29 September 1725. The conclusion of the obloquy, where the king anathematizes 'the bulk of your natives', must also have afforded Swift particular pleasure. The fact that Swift believes in much of what he has written here certainly adds some genuine, albeit cold, venom to the process of denunciation, but there is also a sense in which it seems personal, as if Swift himself (especially in the litany against institutions) is making a bitter complaint about his own lack of advancement. More interesting than the contents of the speech are its form and context. The king is

³¹Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, pp.172-3.

stroking Gulliver, or 'Grildrig' as he calls him, which implies a condescending affection, control, and appropriation; Gulliver becomes identified with his Brobdingnagian name while he is in that country - a process which is repeated wherever he goes - and so gives over his identity to that place. Gulliver changes in the course of the king's speech from a representative of his country - which he definitely was while delivering his 'panegyric' - to an appropriation of the king's, a possession or appurtenance of Brobdingnag. The king keeps Gulliver ideologically apart from the latter's own society, and holds him like a domesticated version of a Yahoo - which, of course, he is - in case he turns feral. Swift uses devices such as the Lilliputians, the Brobdingnagians, the Houyhnhnms, and so forth, as a means by which to juxtapose Gulliver with various different environments which are alien to him; Swift is also keen to point out to the reader that although Gulliver may have escaped some of the vices of his country through his travelling, it has also promoted an instability in his character which gives rise to dangerously altered states of perception. Apart from the fact that the style of the Brobdingnagian king's speech echoes some of Swift's correspondence from that period, as we have seen, it is also markedly similar to the description of Lilliputian social mechanics quoted above, with its flat, matter-of-fact tone. This emphasizes the fact that these passages represent judgements that are both logical and objective, and at the same time out of context, as they are made by members of other societies; Swift's misanthropic system works throughout the novel by matching Gulliver, as a representative of human society, with another culture, and then moving on rapidly. The effect is that both Gulliver and the reader become increasingly disorientated and distanced from normal human behaviour.

At the conclusion of *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift portrays his protagonist as alienating his own natural environment; Gulliver looks at the creatures with whom he should naturally subsist and finds in himself only disgust, and the desire to search elsewhere for companionship. Swift recognizes that if any of us were exposed in concentrated fashion to all the ills of society we would, like Gulliver, become insane; the structure of the novel allows for this, and if we step back and look at the nature of the ordeals which Gulliver faces in the course of his journey, it is easier to see how. When Gulliver is exposed to the Lilliputians, we see that they have a greater simplicity of social mechanism, which allows a hierarchy based on moral rectitude to function. However, it is also clear that the Lilliputian society is inchoate, and that Gulliver can disrupt it easily through sheer force; Swift is using a device of comparative size to illustrate the basic simplicity and moral purity which we leave behind as our own civilization advances, but also how fragile that pure moral structure is in the face of developing human values. Likewise with the Brobdingnagians, size is a complex metaphor for different kinds of social progress;

the Brobdingnagians are far more physically powerful than Gulliver, and are capable of destroying him as easily as he was able to manipulate Lilliputian affairs. However, the Brobdingnag society still shows signs of human character flaw, with the farmer's desire to exploit Gulliver as a side-show and his treatment by the female Brobdingnagians being obvious examples. Swift wants us to recognize that the Brobdingnagian society is similar to our own in many ways, but that it is advanced in terms of its self-emancipated moral structure; the king sees the urge to corrupt personal gain and destructive force in Gulliver's society, and cannot believe that such practices go on. Gulliver is dwarfed physically as well as morally by the species, a fact which is emphasized and not diminished by the fact that the Brobdingnagians are in many respects very similar to humans; they have simply succeeded to a much greater extent in refining their baser instincts.

In the most disparate and most fractured part of the novel, 'A Voyage to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Glubbdubdrib, Luggnagg and Japan', Gulliver is again faced with disturbing distortions of his own society's condition which help us as readers to glean both Swift's intentions and his opinions concerning human society. The hovering Laputa as a metaphor for the English treatment of Ireland is important, as are the fruitless endeavours of the Lagado Academy, but probably the most important episode comes in the visit to Luggnagg, and Gulliver's encounter with the Struldbruggs:

...they commonly acted like mortals, till about thirty years old, after which they grew melancholy and dejected, increasing in both till they came to fourscore. This he [the Luggnaggian king] learned from their own confession; for otherwise there not being above two or three of that species born in an age, they were too few to form a general observation by. When they came to fourscore years, which is reckoned the extremity of living in this country, they had not only all the follies and infirmities of other old men, but many more which arose from the dreadful prospect of never dying. They were not only opinionative, peevish, covetous, morose, vain, talkative, but incapable of friendship, and dead to all natural affection, which never descended below their grandchildren. Envy and impotent desires are their prevailing passions.³²

The Struldbruggs are cursed with the destiny of never being released from the cycle of life, and Swift uses them to warn us of the dangers of grasping after experience beyond our natural sphere. Through an excess of opportunity, all reward becomes meaningless to the Struldbruggs and they become something less than human. As with the Houyhnhnms, a society that builds itself within unnatural ramifications becomes distorted until it is something other than humanity. Swift uses

³²Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, p.257.

the first two parts of the novel to try and help establish our own moral progress, using the distorted images from Lilliput and Brobdingnag to reflect different aspects of human behaviour and social structure. The second two parts focus on the extension and exaggeration of different aspects of human behaviour, to the point where they become unnatural and alter the essential nature of the society which promotes them; the Struldbruggs and the Houyhnhnms both exist beyond human parameters, and those who attempt to imitate them, as Gulliver does, risk alienating their own society. The misanthropy which Gulliver shows in his behaviour towards his family when he finally returns home is as much a result of disorientation as it is of true disgust with mankind, as his risible actions show, but there are pockets in *Gulliver's Travels* where Swift is genuinely denouncing human corruption, such as the speech of the Brobdingnagian king. What is important is that each expression of misanthropy is examined in context, so that as we follow Gulliver on his journey we are always aware that Swift is continually searching for new ways to show society its own face, sometimes fascinatingly distorted, but always with an element of true and frank reflection.

In his treatment of Gulliver, Swift is attacking the follies of mankind through the device of lampooning an imaginary individual; in the treatment of the different races which Gulliver encounters in the course of his travels, Swift is attacking different aspects of society (as well as giving some directions as to how they could be improved), again with a general application. Some of the examples from the third part could be taken as specific references to members of Swift's own society (for example, the experiments being carried out at the Lagado Academy have been identified by some critics as a satire on Robert Boyle, the Astronomer Royal), but in general the novel uses a broad brush when dealing with social problems.

Pope identifies the problem experienced by satirists, and by purveyors of moral philosophy, in his 'Design' for *An Essay on Man*:

The science of Human Nature is, like all other sciences, reduced to a *few clear points*: There are not *many certain truths* in this world. It is therefore in the Anatomy of the Mind as in that of the Body; more good will accrue to mankind by attending to the large, open, and perceptible parts, than by studying too much such finer nerves and vessels, the confirmations and uses of which will for ever escape our observation. The *disputes* are all upon these last, and, I will venture to say, they have less sharpened the *wits* than the *hearts* of men against each other, and have diminished the practice, more than advanced the theory, of Morality. if I could flatter myself that this Essay has any merit, it is in steering betwixt extremes of doctrines seemingly opposite, in passing over terms

utterly unintelligible, and in forming a *temperate* yet not *inconsistent*, and a *short* yet not *imperfect* system of Ethics.³³

Both Pope and Swift see the importance of not dwelling too greatly on the details of social ills, the symptoms of the disease; however, while it is Pope who actually sets out this manifesto, it is Swift who sticks to it more closely, at least in the examples which we have looked at thus far. Where both these two writers run into difficulty is when it is necessary to attack society; the misanthropic device may turn into pure invective as disgust and revulsion drive the satirist further and further from the society which he is attacking. We have seen some of Swift's difficulties with this in passages from *Gulliver's Travels*, but Pope too, despite his desires to remain to be seen as part of the majority and subject to the same '*short* yet not *imperfect* system of Ethics', also had great difficulty in escaping an innate propensity towards cultural elitism, as this extract from Joseph Spence's *Observations, Anecdotes and Characters of Books and Men* (1820) confirms:

The gross of mankind are generally right in their judgement, at least they have a very good mediocre taste. As to higher things, it requires pains to distinguish justly [and have a high taste]: they are not for the crowd, and even to offer them is, as Ben Jonson says, giving caviare to the multitude.³⁴

Swift and Pope, then, have a constant desire to detach themselves from the 'multitude', which allows an objective satire in some respects, but which also promotes a distortion of perspective. As Timothy Keegan points out, '...Pope and Swift [...] imagined themselves members of a tiny fraternity of civilized men in an age of almost unexampled moral, intellectual, and political corruption'³⁵, and this inevitably leads them to a withdrawal from the general social morass which they seek to criticize; likewise, the desire to create a literary, valid social satire, as opposed to a personal tirade or lampoon, fuels the desire of the writer to find an objective position. However, both were aware that such a detachment could result in distortion of perspective, and even perhaps encourage the intensification of invective rather than regulating it into a misanthropic tool. In *Gulliver's Travels*, we see Swift attempting to regulate this distortion by showing how Gulliver himself becomes a

³³Pope, 'The Design' to *An Essay on Man*.

³⁴Alexander Pope, June 1739, entry 571 in Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes and Characters of Books and Men* (Two volumes, 1820; reprinted, ed. James M. Osborne, Oxford University Press, 1966), p.238.

³⁵Timothy Keegan, 'Swift's Self-Portraits in Verse, pp.127-43 in Douglas Lane Patey and Timothy Keegan, eds., *Augustan Studies* (University of Delaware Press, Newark, 1985), p.128.

ridiculous figure after too long a separation from the natural influences of his original society, influences which exist within the corruption which repulses him so violently. Likewise, by choosing an individual for his focal point when attacking the English government in the affair of Wood's halfpence, he is making use of a political and rhetorical safety device: although he may (and does) descend into pure invective at times, the figure of Wood absorbs and contains this invective, fairly or unfairly, preventing an unwise mis-direction of the satire directly at bigger and more dangerous targets.

Pope attempts to offset his desire for intellectual separation in *An Essay on Man* by the use of an ethical system, a structure which he can build himself into regardless of the fact that he and the rest of mankind, also incorporated into the structure of the system, are adherents of 'doctrines seemingly opposite', and ideologies and lifestyles incompatible. This is the most important struggle for the satirist who attempts to wield the dangerous rhetorical weapon of misanthropy, a weapon which may so easily backfire: that is, the struggle between the desire for separation and expulsion, and the desire to use pain as a cathartic force to engender a cure for social corruption. For Pope and Swift, this struggle is intensified: they are individuals continually struggling to find a way into, *and* out of, the mass.

CHAPTER II: ATTITUDES TO WOMEN

1. Phallocentrism, Searing and Subtle

The attitude which Pope and Swift take to women is extremely important, both as regards their intellectual and emotional development as individuals, and the effect which their perception of the opposite sex had on their literary portrayal of women in society. Ellen Pollak contends that both these writers adhere to the eighteenth century commonplace of the 'phallogentric', patriarchal text, and details an interesting aspect of literary attitudes to women, up to and including the period in which Swift and Pope were writing:

...although, in England, the age of Locke was also an age of incipient feminism and of unaccustomed interest in female education, dominant eighteenth-century myths of woman sustained the same Judeo-Christian dualism that prevailed in earlier centuries. The exclusive and rigid categories of angel and whore remained intellectual institutions in this age as they had been in others and, as standard terms for conceiving of the female sex, they made the integration of spiritual and erotic attributes in a single woman logically impossible.³⁶

Pope's attitude to women may not be so easily classified, but much of Swift's writing uses this dichotomous view of womanhood as a crutch to help simplify his own involvement with women. The so-called 'excremental' poems of the early 1730s afford us the clearest examples of his attempts to deconstruct concepts of female beauty and virtue; in the first of this series, 'The Lady's Dressing Room' (written 1730, published 1732), Swift uses the device of a young beau, Strephon, entering the vacant boudoir of the object of his desires, to present a supposedly epiphanal study of woman:

Here gallipots and vials placed,
Some filled with washes, some with paste;
Some with pomatum, paints and slops,
And ointments good for scabby chops.
Hard by a filthy basin stands,
Fouled with the scouring of her hands;
the basin takes whatever comes,
The scrapings of her teeth and gums,
A nasty compound of all hues,
For here she spits, and here she spews.³⁷

³⁶Ellen Pollak, *The Poetics of Sexual Myth: Gender and Ideology in the Verse of Swift and Pope* (University of Chicago Press, 1985), p.1.

³⁷Jonathan Swift, 'The Lady's Dressing Room' (written 1730, published 1732), pp.448-52 in

Other poems in this series, such as 'A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed' (written 1731, published 1734), and even substantially earlier works, such as 'The Progress of Beauty' (written ?1719, published 1728), are written in the same vein, with a disillusioning catalogue of the defects of feminine aesthetic artistry. Swift wants to remove the distracting physical presence of the woman herself, so that it is more easy to see exactly what sort of creature we are dealing with, but he is also extremely interested in examining Celia's physical residue. In using this aspect of physicality, Swift wants the reader to realize how ephemeral female beauty is, and that such effort and disgusting process is necessary to achieve this short-lived aesthetic effect. Swift reduces Celia from the idealized figure of Strephon's fantasies to an animal, consumed by the necessity of bodily function. By removing Celia herself from the scene, Swift cleverly allows his case to acquire a universal applicability; by the inclusion of so many accoutrements of the female toilet (make-up, lotions, handkerchiefs, and so on), he manages to taint the very image of womanhood as a clean, pure, and beautiful entity, so that Strephon's (and, by implication, the reader's) whole perception of female beauty is altered:

But Vengeance, goddess never sleeping,
 Soon punished Strephon for his peeping.
 His foul imagination links
 Each dame he sees with all her stinks:
 And, if unsavoury odours fly,
 Conceives a lady standing by:
 All women his description fits,
 And both ideas jump like wits,
 By vicious fancy coupled fast,
 And still appearing in contrast.³⁸

Irvin Ehrenpreis suggests that in these 'excremental' poems the object of Swift's satire 'is not women or the female body but the convention of simultaneously praising women for their bodies and pretending they are ethereal. In other words, Swift attacks the hypocrisy of sexual passion.'³⁹ There is certainly some satire upon conventional male images of the female body and the naive assumptions made by men about women, but Swift accompanies this with a satire upon men's foolishness in fixing their lascivious attentions upon such corrupt objects. Swift seems to be

Swift, *Poems*, II.33-42.

³⁸Swift, 'The Lady's Dressing Room', II.119-28.

³⁹Irvin Ehrenpreis, *Swift: The Man, His Works and the Age* (Three volumes, Methuen, London: *Mr. Swift and His Contemporaries* (1962); *Dr. Swift* (1967); *Dean Swift* (1983); ii.29.

addressing the poem to male readers and using the influence of his words to incite a rejection of women. These 'excremental' poems were very popular in Swift's own lifetime, 'The Lady's Dressing Room' in particular, but it is difficult to imagine women of the time, especially those suffering from the ravages of age, being particularly amused by Swift's lambasting of the female image of beauty.

If Strephon were shown in the poem simply to be the victim of one conniving woman, then Ehrenpreis's contention would perhaps have a greater currency. As it is, Swift leads us down this road, with the passage of verse quoted above giving the impression that Strephon's perception has been falsely altered by his unfortunate encounter with Celia, but then negates this with his confirmation that Strephon is cursed with the inability to enjoy any longer the illusion created by the 'gaudy tulips' of female beauty, which are inevitably the result of foul activity. That Swift repeats this formula, with long drawn-out descriptions of the decrepitude and decay of his chosen example of female deception, does not help the case for his exculpation from the charges of misogyny either. It seems much more likely that these poems were the ideal vehicle for him to convince himself and others of the unworthiness of women as associates, the grim reality of their sexual promise, and the dangerousness of keeping their company too often.

As with other areas of their public life, Swift and Pope differ in their attitude to women because of their different levels of personal confidence: Swift is capable of attracting women, and there is evidence to suggest potential, and perhaps actual sexual relationships during his lifetime; Pope, by contrast, with his physical deformity, and despite the fact that he too probably had at least one sexual relationship, is much more vulnerable to the emotional damage which dealings with women may inflict. This is not to say that Swift was completely confident in how to deal with women, far from it: much of his writings concerning women, and his actions when dealing with heterosexual relationships, reveal a deep-seated fear of intimacy which governs his attitude towards the opposite sex throughout his life. What both writers have in common in this area is a need to keep their own attitudes towards, and relationships with, women under control. Pope's method is, however, more varied and more subtle than Swift's usually bilious outbursts. If we look at the ostensibly simple and innocent piece of verse, 'Upon a Girl of Seven Years old' (written c.1713, published 1714), we see how he begins to do this:

Wit's Queen, (if what the Poets sing be true)
And Beauty's Goddess Childhood never knew,
Pallas they say Sprung from the Head of *Jove*,
Full grown, and from the Sea the Queen of Love;
But had they, Miss, your Wit and Beauty seen,
Venus and *Pallas* both had children been.

They, from the Sweetness of that Radiant look,
 A Copy of Young *Venus* might have took;
 And from those pretty Things you speak have told,
 How *Pallas* talk'd when she was Seven Years old.⁴⁰

This appears to be simply an appreciation of the beauty of a child, but, consciously or unconsciously, Pope has a hidden agenda here. His inclusion of various allusions to Roman mythology takes us into an ethereal and unreal realm of beauty, quite unlike the visions of excremental physicality in the Swiftian psyche, making it clear that Pope does not want to deal with the reality of women, but an idealized version. Moreover, his desire to present a young child as the epitome of female beauty increases the distancing of the poem from any objective portrayal of womanhood, because the object of the study is not really a legitimate representative of womanhood, but of an asexual childhood. By suggesting that Venus and Pallas could have modelled their attributes on this child, Pope successfully traps the female image in an imaginary cycle, moving from the inchoate character of the child to the insubstantial image of the goddess, with no resting place in reality. When Pope praises 'the Sweetness of that Radiant Look', he is in fact making a tacit comment on the imperfections and failings of mature female beauty, and when he presents the 'pretty Things' that a child utters as the best account a female may give of herself, he is deriding the fully-formed female character and intellect. The poet chooses not to make the sort of direct and scathing attack that Swift does, fearing retaliation, but instead criticizes womanhood by default. He praises the inchoate, unformed female character because an unthinking woman is much more easily controlled by a patriarchal society, and so much less likely to retaliate in kind. This is a more subtle brand of misogyny than that which Swift employs, and is based on control from intellectual and emotional close-quarters, rather than the control from a distance which Swift favours.

An even more subtle and effective variation on this formula can be seen in the second of Pope's *Moral Essays*, 'To a Lady. Of the Characters of Women' (written 1732-4, published 1735). 'Upon a Girl of Seven Years old' contained the seeds of a misogynistic ideology, but the 'Epistle to a Lady' builds carefully upon that foundation, bringing it into a contemporary social context. Pope begins with a presentation of women that contains subtle patriarchal overtones:

Nothing so true as what you once let fall,
 'Most Women have no Characters at all'.

⁴⁰Alexander Pope, 'Upon a Girl of Seven Years old' (written c.1713, published 1714), p.254 in Pope, *Poems*,

Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear,
 And best distinguish'd by black, brown or fair.
 How many pictures of one Nymph we view,
 All how unlike each other, all how true!
 Arcadia's Countess, here, in ermin'd pride,
 Is there, Pastora by a fountain side:
 Here Fannia, leering on her own good man,
 Is there, a naked Leda with a Swan.⁴¹

Martha 'Patty' Blount, possibly Pope's mistress and a beneficiary of his will, is the addressee of this epistle, and by using her words in the second line, the poet goes about clearing his own name of any potential charges of misogyny. He also attempts to insinuate that a good and honest woman, such as Martha Blount, would have no hesitation in criticizing her own kind. Pope opens the poem-epistle by establishing that the majority of women are without distinctive character. The references to romance literature, such as Sir Philip Sidney's *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (1590), and figures from mythological contexts, and Italian Renaissance and English Pastoral art, recreate the mood of ethereal idealism which we encountered in the previous poem; once more, Pope does not want to confuse his idea of women with reality. The poet claims that women are changeable, and while this is essentially a character weakness, it is also this which makes them attractive to men. At ll.41-2, we find a turn-of-phrase which is highly reminiscent of the closing lines of Swift's 'The Lady's Dressing Room': 'Ladies, like variegated Tulips, show,/ 'Tis to their Changes that their charms they owe'. Essentially, Pope is praising weakness in women, encouraging them not to take themselves too seriously; 'Their happy spots the nice admirer take,/ Fine by defect, and delicately weak' (ll.43-4). When, at the beginning of the piece, Pope declares the characterlessness of women, he is also paving the way for a demonstration of patriarchal control: the different aspects of women which he sees when they are placed in different contexts (l.5ff) is not so much a recounting of experience as a projection of a patriarchal ideal upon the woman in question. Pope ostensibly becomes an admirer of these different aspects of womanhood during the course of the opening to the epistle, and gives the metaphor of the admiring male as painter, attempting to depict the ephemeral and polymorphous beauty of the individual woman. However, in presenting the women as characterless entities, he is also presenting them as *tabulae rasae*, blank canvases; in effect, the admiring male is not painting what he sees, but projecting his own desires onto the woman and (Pope is attempting to unite the poem's male speaker with a masculine reader here, in spite of the stated addressee) filling in the details as he pleases:

⁴¹Alexander Pope, 'Epistle to a Lady. Of the Characters of Women', pp.559-69 in Pope, *Poems*, ll.1-10.

Come then, the colours and the ground prepare!
 Dip in the Rainbow, trick her off in Air,
 Chuse a firm Cloud, before it fall, and in it
 Catch, ere she fall, the Cynthia of this minute.⁴²

Pope allows his artist's palette to indulge in a little Swiftian misogyny at l.25ff, with the attack on 'Sappho', or Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (an enmity was nurtured between herself and Pope's and Swift's circle, to such a degree that after their deaths she had their faces, along with that of Bolingbroke, painted on the inside of her toilet bowl), but most of the epistle is concerned with creating a role for women in society as entertaining and comforting, but ineffectual, appendages to men. This culminates in a division of men and women into, respectively, 'public' and 'private' creatures:

But grant, in Public Men sometimes are shown,
 A Woman's seen in Private life alone:
 Our bolder Talents in full light display'd,
 Your virtues open fairest in the shade.
 Bred to disguise, in Public 'tis you hide;
 There, none distinguish 'twixt your Shame or Pride,
 Weakness or Delicacy; all so nice,
 That each may seem a Virtue, or a Vice.
 In Men, we various Ruling Passions find,
 In Women, two almost divide the kind;
 Those, only fix'd, they first or last obey,
 The love of Pleasure, and the love of Sway.⁴³

Pope emphasizes female desire for power - 'Sway' - but he also tries to encourage women to retreat from public exposure, urging them to take their talents into the back room as assistants for their men, where they will be most deeply appreciated: 'Your virtues open fairest in the shade'. Pope was, of course, merely voicing the prevailing sentiments of his age, but the fact that he goes to such lengths to endorse them means that we cannot separate him from the patriarchal tradition; indeed, as a result of his importance as a poet, he becomes a literary landmark for that tradition. At ll.204-6, above, we see this instinctive misogyny begin to rise, as Pope exhorts women to remain in the shadows, if for no other reason than that there no-one will see what flawed creatures they are; he does not countenance the possibility of their talents being concealed as well. Shortly after this we see an

⁴²Pope, 'Epistle to a Lady', ll.17-20.

⁴³Pope, 'Epistle to a Lady', ll.199-210.

example of Pope exploiting through the use of generalization, one of the elements at the core of misogynistic, or indeed any other kind of prejudiced thought:

Men, some to Bus'ness, some to Pleasure take;
 But ev'ry Woman is at heart a Rake:
 Men, some to Quiet, some to public Strife;
 But ev'ry Lady would be Queen for life.
 Yet mark the fate of a whole Sex of Queens!
 Pow'r all their end, but Beauty all their means.
 In Youth they conquer, with so wild a rage,
 As leaves them scarce a Subject in their Age:
 For foreign glory, foreign joy, they roam;
 No thought of Peace or Happiness at home.
 But Wisdom's Triumph is well-timed Retreat,
 As hard a science to the Fair as Great!⁴⁴

Pope characterizes women as uniformly power-crazed, but also allows himself a snigger behind his hand at the transience of female beauty and its influence: 'In Youth they conquer, with so wild a rage,/ As leaves them scarce a Subject in their Age'. As with Pope's message to mankind in *An Essay on Man*, his message to womankind here is one of 'Know then thyself'; he strongly desires a masculine society, controlled by men and consequently lessening the danger of emotional damage to himself. Women who seek 'foreign' experiences and power, Pope implies, are also making themselves vulnerable, as well as jeopardizing the structure of society, whereas home should be their focal point. What the poet is always moving towards in the 'Epistle to a Lady' is an appreciation of women as superficial creatures. Both Swift's 'gaudy Tulips' and Pope's 'variegated' ones have in common the aim of presenting women as aesthetic creatures, varied, but only within a limited and shallow set of parameters; Pope seems a little more gentle in his phrasing, but essentially both writers want to fix women as symbols of inefficacy. The 'Epistle to a Lady' praises the image of women who will drop quietly into the background and allow men to take what they need of them (their superficial charms, that is) and impose upon that facade whichever characteristics he desires. At the end of the piece, Pope presents us with this conclusion himself:

And yet, believe me, good as well as ill,
 Woman's at best a Contradiction still.
 Heav'n, when it strives to polish all it can
 Its last best work, but forms a softer Man;
 Picks from each sex, to make its Fav'rite blest,
 Your love of Pleasure, our desire of Rest,

⁴⁴Pope, 'Epistle to a Lady', ll.215-26.

Blends, in exception to all gen'ral rules,
 Your Taste of Follies, with our Scorn of Fools,
 Reserve with Frankness, Art with Truth ally'd,
 Courage with Softness, Modesty with Pride,
 Fix'd Principles, with Fancy ever new;
 Shakes all together, and produces - YOU.⁴⁵

Pope's contention that the modification of strong male virtues produces the perfect woman (Martha Blount being an example of this) means that a positive portrayal of woman - that is, one in which the poet offers no criticism - may be used to reinforce the concept of woman as background to male social advancement. In Pope's portrayal of the ideal woman as 'a softer Man', there is the implicit but nevertheless strong suggestion that a woman should echo the principles of men in spirit, while taking no active part in implementing them. Effectively, Pope believes that women should act as a defining element in the male psyche, off-setting the harsh and intense nature of masculine qualities, but only with passive, calming qualities of their own; he preaches reactive (as opposed to proactive) rights for women.

In the passage quoted above, Pope is keen to emphasize that women are continually prone to confusion and 'Contradiction', even when in their ideal form; this emphasizes the weakness of women, and, as before, Pope continues to praise this weakness as the vital element which women bring to society - a 'Love of Pleasure', 'Taste of Follies', and so forth. In Pope's world, men provide the hard and dynamic structure around which society develops, while women grease the wheels and soften the blows with which men knock this structure into shape; in a sentence, men form society while women decorate it. In order for it to be possible for Pope to write this without seeming deliberately offensive, however, he must first apotheosize women, and then carefully deconstruct the image which he has carefully raised up, so that it is clear that what we see is simply female beauty raised up by male power and endeavour. Swift attempts a similar feat in some of his writing, but, as we know, is much less concerned about causing offence, and it is useful to compare the two techniques at this point; here is an example from part two of *Gulliver's Travels*, where the protagonist describes a Brobdingnagian nurse 'giving suck' to her infant charge:

I must confess no object ever disgusted me so much as the sight of her monstrous breast, which I cannot tell what to compare with, so as to give the curious reader an idea of its bulk, shape and colour. It stood prominent six foot, and could not be less than sixteen in circumference. The nipple was about half the bigness of my head, and the hue both of

⁴⁵Pope, 'Epistle to a Lady', ll.269-80.

that and the dug so varified with spots, pimples and freckles, that nothing could appear more nauseous: for I had a near sight of her, she was sitting down the more conveniently to give suck, and I standing on the table. This made me reflect on the fair skins of our English ladies, who appear so beautiful to us, only because they are of our own size, and their defects not to be seen but through a magnifying glass, where we find by experiment that the smoothest and the whitest skins look rough and coarse, and ill coloured.⁴⁶

Swift, unlike Pope in the 'Epistle to a Lady', does not attempt to apotheosize womanhood through rhetoric, but he couches the misogynistic foray within the description of the most advanced moral society in the novel. Swift has shown that the Brobdingnagians are a flawed culture, but that their social ideology is basically sound. Having established this through the device of comparative size, he then uses the same device as a means by which to propagate his own reservations about the female gender. The fact that Swift chooses to subject Gulliver and the reader to a disgusted examination of an essentially natural and healthy action for a woman to perform, breast-feeding (again, however, we must acknowledge that he was probably fundamentally in line with the opinion of polite society on this point), reflects something distinctly unpleasant in Swift's own psyche; he seems to want us to deny the essential functions of womanhood, in order that we may diminish the importance of women in society. The description of the nurse's breast indicates Swift's own fear of female sexuality and the female form in general, but, more deeply, it indicates his fear of admitting masculine reliance upon something which only a woman can provide. That he uses this description to lead onto a critique of flawed female beauty in contemporary society makes it clear, too, that he does not want us to think that the Brobdingnagian woman is revolting simply because she is different; rather, Swift has held up a magnifying glass to conventional female beauty with his creation of the Brobdingnagian women, and he wants it to be seen as a revelation, not a contrivance. To drive the point home, he has Gulliver make similarly damning observations when he is taken to the Royal Court, and encounters the Queen's Maids of Honour:

That which gave me most uneasiness among these Maids of Honour, when my nurse carried me to visit them, was to see them use me without any manner of ceremony, like a creature of no consequence. For, they would strip themselves to the skin, and put on their smocks in my presence, while I was placed on their toilet directly before their naked bodies, which, I am sure, to me was very far from being a tempting sight, or from giving me any other emotion than those of horror and disgust. Their skins appeared so coarse and uneven, so variously coloured, when I saw them near, with a mole here and there as broad as a trencher, and

⁴⁶Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, p.130.

hairs hanging down from it thicker than pack-threads; to say nothing further concerning the rest of their persons.⁴⁷

Swift shows the lack of consideration which he perceives to be a concomitant of youth and (especially) beauty, in this description; the fact that 'the handsomest among these Maids of Honour, a pleasant frolicsome girl of sixteen' is also the one who subjects Gulliver to the most lewd and disgusting conduct is no coincidence. Gulliver's passionate expression of disgust seems to have cooled since the 'dug' passage, and the language Swift uses here attempts a more balanced appraisal, as if Gulliver is sure that these girls cannot know what they are doing, or how revolting they appear to him. Indeed, we sense something of Swift's own confusion between sexual attraction and the desire to pull away from any potential source of emotional pain; the description of the youngest maid seems to arouse, disturb, and bring out affection in Gulliver in equal measure. The spitting disgust has left this passage, then, but there remains a concern to convey the true nature of these maidens, as Swift perceives it to be.

2. Flawed Women and Wonderful Girls

What Pope's and Swift's portrayals of womanhood are designed to suggest, Swift with a sometimes frothing indignation, Pope with a little more subtlety, is that, while women may be an inevitable part of human society, they must be recognized as the weakest and most multifariously flawed part of it. The best role for women, in the opinion of these writers, is behind the scenes, where they may supply comfort and balm to the men who dictate the way in which their public lives are organized. Swift will not countenance any deviation from this rule, and counters any insurrection with bilious instruction; Pope, however, recognizes that sometimes the female spirit will harbour aspirations to greater involvement in life, 'foreign glories', and he attempts to find a suitable answer to this for a patriarchal society. His most striking attempt comes in 'Eloisa to Abelard' (written c.1716, published 1717); from early on in the piece, he is keen to point out that even in extreme passion and expression of character (perhaps more so, in fact) woman is subject to pervasive weakness:

Dear fatal name! rest ever unreveal'd,
Nor pass these lips in holy silence seal'd.
Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,
Where, mix'd with God's, his lov'd idea lies.
Oh write it not, my hand - The name appears

⁴⁷Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, p.158.

Already written - wash it out, my tears!
 In vain lost *Eloisa* weeps and prays,
 Her heart still dictates, and her hand obeys.⁴⁸

Pope has chosen a tragic and intense love story in which to frame his portrayal of the excited female spirit, and uses this context to present a 'positive', or sympathetic, portrayal of woman: that is, a woman wretchedly in love and consequently inspiring pity in readers of either sex because of her devotion to a man. The magnificent way in which Pope conveys this great passion is not in doubt, but then neither is the fact that *Eloisa* cuts a most abject figure. She becomes Pope's woman in a glass jar, a monument to the dangers of female sexuality, her intensity of emotion and desire proving the hazards waiting for men who wish to associate with such a creature; *Abelard*, too, acts as silent testimony to this in his impotent and castrated state. It is significant that we never get to know how Pope believes *Abelard* to feel; obviously, we are aware that he will not be in a state of ecstasy, but Pope makes sure that he remains silent, symbolically the emotionally wronged or deceived party (we already know that it is he who has been actually wronged, in his treatment by *Eloisa*'s father as a direct result of his involvement with her). We never know how *Abelard* is coping with his fate, and, though we have an intellectual awareness of his suffering, it is *Eloisa*'s which we are made to focus on and with which our sympathies become involved. In the passage of verse quoted above, we see *Eloisa* unable to control her actions because of a weakened will - 'her heart still dictates and her hand obeys'. A further sign of weakness is that *Eloisa* has allowed her emotional disruption to affect her spiritual realm: the 'lov'd idea' of *Abelard* becomes 'mix'd with God's', distorting the universal hierarchy to which Pope (and by implication, his readers) attaches such importance, as we have seen in the *Essay on Man*. *Eloisa*'s emotions begin to feed off themselves, and we develop an image of woman becoming prey to her own heightened state of sensitivity: a weakness, and a dangerous weakness at that. However, as with Swift's presentation of the Royal Maids of Honour in *Gulliver's Travels*, Pope makes it clear that he does not believe *Eloisa* to be responsible for her all-consuming passion, and at l.207ff, we find her envying those who are ignorant of such torment of desire:

How happy is the blameless Vestal's lot!
 The world forgetting, by the world forgot.
 Eternal sun-shine of the spotless mind!
 Each pray'r accepted, and each wish resign'd;
 Labour and rest, that equal periods keep;

⁴⁸Alexander Pope, 'Eloisa to Abelard'(written c.1716, published 1717), pp.252-61 in Pope, *Poems*, ll.9-16.

'Obedient slumbers that can wake and weep';
 Desires composed, affections ever ev'n,
 Tears that delight, and sighs that waft to heav'n.
 Grace shines around her with serenest beams,
 And whisp'ring Angels prompt her golden dreams.
 For her th'unfading rose of *Eden* blooms,
 And wings of Seraphs shed divine perfumes;
 For her the Spouse prepares the bridal ring,
 For her white Virgins Hymenceals sing;
 To sounds of heav'nly harps, she dies away,
 And melts in visions of eternal day.⁴⁹

This passage of verse stands on its own as a very carefully constructed piece of propaganda for Pope's ideal vision of pure womanhood. In having Eloisa cite this 'blameless' existence as something she longs for, the poet simultaneously has the vision endorsed as preferable to the emotional turmoil in which Eloisa finds herself, and justifies that endorsement in his forgiveness of Eloisa for her sins (he forgives by showing in the text that she has no control over her desires). Throughout the poem, Pope is delicately constructing a scenario in which he may expose Eloisa's weakness, and at the same time make it clear that the reader, like his own text, should forgive her: she is, after all, only a woman. As the poem progresses, Eloisa is repeatedly called upon to confront her problems with conflicting erotic and spiritual desire, and while at one instance she will be seen to abandon all hope of heavenly comfort in favour of the enjoyment of an unencumbered fantasy of reunion with her lover, in the next instance she is repenting, and longing for her mind to be filled with thoughts of God alone. Pope is simultaneously offering Eloisa tacit forgiveness, as a creature struggling to do what is right in the face of overwhelming opposition from her emotions, and showing that women will instinctively attempt to bring men down from the spiritual realm to the physical and emotional one, where they may reign as false kings in a disruption of the rightful universal hierarchy. The 'blameless Vestal' is Pope's way of presenting hope for women beyond the realm of the passions, and as in his other illustrations of worthwhile female endeavour, she is absent from public society, and happily so: 'The world forgetting, by the world forgot.' This woman is a paradigm of temperance, 'Obedient', 'compos'd', 'ev'n', and so on. She is without the corruption of fleshly pursuits ('For her th'unfading rose of *Eden* blooms'), and is celebrated because of her obscurity. Rather than standing out from the natural order of things, as Eloisa does with her unseemly desire for Abelard, the idealized maiden fits in with the patriarchal society and is praised for it. By using the figure of Eloisa as his speaker, Pope is effectively able to get the corrupted and socially officious

⁴⁹Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard*, ll.207-22.

image of woman to declare her unworthiness, and push forward the image of pure, self-effacing womanhood to take her place, just as he had achieved the opposite in the 'Epistle to A Lady'.

As Pope may provide his own antidote to female weakness in 'Eloisa to Abelard', through the device of his vision of the Vestal virgin, so Swift provides us with an antidote to the understandable, but ultimately unacceptable, conduct of the Maids of Honour, in the form of the farmer's daughter, whom Gulliver knows as Glumdalclitch:

The poor girl lay me on her bosom, and fell a weeping with shame and grief. She apprehended some mischief would happen to me from rude vulgar folks, who might squeeze me to death or break one of my limbs by taking me in their hands. She had also observed how modest I was in my nature, how nicely I regarded my honour, and what an indignity I should conceive it to be exposed for money as a public spectacle to the meanest of people. She said, her papa and mamma had promised that Grildrig should be hers, but now she found they meant to serve her as they did last year, when they pretended to give her a lamb, and yet, as soon as it was fat, sold it to a butcher.⁵⁰

As with Pope's vision of female perfection, Glumdalclitch is young and sexually innocent, assuming the emotional role of mother, but without knowing the physical role of lover first. Swift's ideal is unformed and has no part in public society, but instead shields Gulliver from, and prepares him for, his encounters with the Brobdingagians. However, although she does not possess the corrupting sexual urges of the (ironically named) Maids of Honour, Swift ensures that Glumdalclitch still displays the possessiveness which he and Pope so clearly fear in womankind. Eloisa longs for physical contact with her lover, and Glumdalclitch longs for physical possession of Gulliver, or 'Grildrig', as she calls him (her renaming of Gulliver is another indication of her possessiveness and desire to appropriate him). Glumdalclitch may care for Gulliver's well-being, but in the end she does so as she would do a pet, an unthinking animal which she may be deprived of simply for material ends: it is as likely that Gulliver will be sold or exhibited to the public as it was that Glumdalclitch's last animal was sold to a butcher. It is clear in this way that, even when Pope and Swift are willing to present their female ideal, unformed and childish, willing to give comfort without offering to interfere, they are still intent upon retaining an intimation of danger in their portraits of the opposite sex.

If women represented danger to Swift and Pope, then the actual social manifestation of that danger, for the former at least, was marriage. Marriage offers

⁵⁰Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, p.135.

another kind of disliked institution for Swift, but this time because the coterie it constructs is so severely limiting - no more than two may enter. In 'The Progress of Marriage' (written 1721-2, published 1765), Swift attacks this institution as a social device which makes possible the manipulation of the gullible male (in this case one Benjamin Pratt, a former university colleague of Swift's, who had also attained a position in the Church of Ireland) by the avaricious and ambitious female. Here, we see Swift using the mechanics of mythology to suggest the possibility of idyll, but in this case it is used ironically so that Fate is seen as unwilling to bless the union:

They first invite the Cyprian queen,
'Twas answered, she would not be seen.
The Graces next, and all the Muses
Were bid in form, but sent excuses:
Juno attended at the porch
With farthing candle for a torch,
While Mistress Iris held her train,
The faded bow distilling rain.
Then Hebe came and took her place
But showed no more than half a face.⁵¹

With the mention of royalty, the Graces, the Muses, etc., we find Swift poking fun at the idea that the marriage has any true beauty or spiritual significance, and also that it is an embarrassment: the refusals show the union for what it is, a sham. When Juno turns up, ludicrously 'admitted at the porch' with a 'farthing candle', we know that Swift is attempting to emphasize the spiritual poverty of the marriage, while Mistress Iris's 'faded bow distilling rain' indicates the weakened promise of faith. Having attacked the institution itself in this brilliant rhetorical fashion, Swift cannot then resist concluding the poem with a customary fervid anathematization:

The widow goes through all her forms;
New lovers now will come in swarms.
Oh, may I see her soon dispensing
Her favours to some broken ensign!
Him let her marry for his face,
And only coat of tarnished lace;
To turn her naked out of doors,
And spend her jointure on his whores:
But for a parting present leave her
A rooted pox to last forever.⁵²

⁵¹Jonathan Swift, 'The Progress of Marriage' (written 1721-2, published 1765), pp.242-7 in Swift, *Poems*, II.7-16.

⁵²Swift, 'The Progress of Marriage', II.157-66.

Swift has transferred the blame that he originally loads onto marriage itself onto the women involved, and has in the process managed to invent a new, dynamic form of misogyny; the weakness that we saw previously as inherent in women, and as such excusable as a part of nature, has been transferred here to a part of the marriage structure. Swift attributes marriage to women as a device by which they may capture and control the power of a masculine society, and as such, an extremely strong threat to the patriarchal order to which he himself is so closely allied. In this way, Swift portrays the manipulative woman as utterly corrupt, while it is the marriage structure and not the female character which is inherently flawed and thus, to some extent, excusable.

The poem illustrates emphatically Swift's objections to the potential, which he portrays as being inherent in marriage, for female cupidity to lead to abuse of that institution, but to discover how he believed a necessary part of a religiously structured life should be dealt with, we must turn to 'A Letter to a Young Lady On Her Marriage' (1727). In this piece, Swift endeavours to bring assistance to a young wife who is 'beginning to enter a Course of Life, where you will want much Advice to divert you from falling into many Errors, Fopperies and follies to which your Sex is subject'⁵³. In this example, we once again see Swift tackling the problems which he perceives in women who appear superficially to display great beauty, but conceal underneath a corrupt and foetid reality:

You will perhaps be offended when I advise you to abate a little of that violent Passion for fine Cloaths, so predominant in your Sex. It is a little hard, that ours, for whose sake you wear them, are not admitted to be of your Council: I may venture to assure you that we will make an abatement at any time of Four pounds a yard in a Brocade, if the Ladies will but allow a suitable addition of care in the Cleanliness and Sweetness of their Persons: For, the satirical part of mankind will needs believe, that it is not impossible, to be very fine and very filthy; and that the Capacities of a Lady are sometimes apt to fall short in cultivating Cleanliness and finery together. I shall only add, upon so tender a subject, what a pleasant Gentleman said concerning a silly Woman of quality; that nothing could make her supportable but cutting off her Head, for his Ears were offended by her Tongue, and his Nose by her Hair and Teeth.⁵⁴

⁵³Jonathan Swift, 'A Letter to a Young Lady On Her Marriage' (1727), pp.61-7 in Jonathan Swift, *Satires and Personal Writings*, ed. William Alfred Eddy (Oxford University Press, 1932), p.61.

⁵⁴Swift, 'Letter to a Young Lady', p.63.

Swift's main point here, apart from the fact that women, if left to their own devices, are filthy creatures, is that women's actions should be calculated according to how likely they are to be pleasing to men. Women, such as the 'silly Woman of quality' mentioned towards the end of this passage, lose their meaning for Swift if they are no longer pleasing, in superficial ways, to the male perception. He sees them as reserving their most 'violent Passion' for inconsequentialities such as clothing, and thus their shallow personalities must be directed and modified according to more considered and sensible male tastes. More than the individual woman, however, Swift is fearful of the coming-together of women in a coterie which could threaten his own ideals. As Pope praises Martha Blount in the 'Epistle to a Lady' for her readiness to detach herself from, and criticize, her own sex, so Swift avers that 'To say the truth, I never yet knew a tolerable Woman to be fond of her own Sex', and that 'a Knot of Ladies, got together by themselves, is a very school of Impertinence and Distraction, and it is well if those be the worst'⁵⁵. Swift sees women as best submerged in the company of males, so that their vices and faults may not be exaggerated by the presence of other women, and may in fact be subdued by the masculine example afforded by such an environment. As with 'The Progress of Marriage', however, Swift's hitherto carefully constructed argument cannot end without him indulging himself in a rant:

As Divines say, that some People take more pains to be Damned, than it would cost them to be Sacred; so your sex employs more thought, memory, and application to be Fools, than would serve to make them wise and useful. When I reflect on this, I cannot conceive you to be Human Creatures, but a sort of Species hardly a degree above a Monkey; who has more diverting Tricks than any of you; is an Animal less mischievous and expensive, might in time be a tolerable Critic in Velvet and Brocade, and for ought I know wou'd equally become them.⁵⁶

Here, Swift makes allusion to the eighteenth century commonplace of women as angel or whore, as mentioned by Ellen Pollak (see above), although it must be said that Swift rarely identifies angels in female form, and certainly not here. However, he is keen to play upon the idea of a polemic dichotomy, with most women seen to be pressing headlong towards a debauched and wasteful existence without his guiding hand. However, while most of the letter has at least had some ostensible purpose, the final condemnatory passage, where women are compared unfavourably with monkeys, seems to be Swift simply venting spleen, albeit in memorable phrasing.

⁵⁵Swift, 'Letter to a Young Lady', p.65.

⁵⁶Swift, "Letter to a Young Lady", p.67.

Swift controls the perception of women very effectively in the piece, primarily by denying them any value as sexual creatures: although the brocade, etc., which they wear is, Swift admits, for the benefit of men, it is referred to more as gaudy decoration than an alluring way of presenting the female form. When he discusses women as physical beings, Swift may as well be talking about Monkeys, or any other type of pet, as this seems to be the function which he believes women best serve. He cannot deal with women as social creatures with intellects worthy of attention and inclusion, nor can he accept their sensuality, which he fears may undermine his own intellectual and moral rectitude. Instead, Swift prefers to treat women as another species, as part of the 'mass' of humanity worthy of special attention, because of their added dangerousness to right-thinking men; he looks down on them as sub-human when he considers their existence in the abstract, and propagates a similar treatment of them in much of his writing.

3. A Tradition of Keeping Women in Their Place

To find a precursor or model for Swift's attitude to women, we need look no further than a particular favourite of his, the French writer and philosopher, La Rochefoucauld. In his collection of *Portraits* (1659), La Rochefoucauld incorporates his attitudes to women into his own self-portrait:

I am scrupulously polite with women, and I do not think I have ever said a word in their presence that could have caused them embarrassment. When they are intelligent I prefer their conversation to men's, for there is a smooth ease about it that is not found in us men, and moreover it seems to me that they express themselves more clearly and give a more graceful turn to what they say. I was formerly something of a ladies' man, but although I am still young that is no longer the case. I have given up making pretty compliments and am only amazed that there are so many serious-minded men who still do.⁵⁷

The genial and well-balanced tone in which La Rochefoucauld's 'Self Portrait' is written seems a world away from Swift's ranting and hard-nosed criticism, but the fundamental structure upon which it stands is the same. Although Swift's written work, as we have seen, often rails forcibly and, indeed, misogynistically, against women, he made a point of conducting himself impeccably in their company

⁵⁷François duc de la Rochefoucauld, *Portraits* (1659), reprinted in François duc de la Rochefoucauld, *Maxims*, trans. Leonard Tancock (Penguin Classics, London, 1959), p.29.

(although, it must be admitted, there were some exceptions to this rule: Laetitia Pilkington, the social diarist, was subjected to a number of painful and sadistic indignities by Swift, while she was in an advanced state of pregnancy). Swift's insistence on treating women with due deference in public situations, like La Rochefoucauld's, reflects a desire that they should be maintained as part of a strict order; if one includes women in a structure of decorum, then they are also subject to the rules of that structure. La Rochefoucauld expresses his preference for women's conversation to men's, and although Swift never does this explicitly, it is another point on which they must be recognized as in agreement. Swift had his fellow Scriblerians and his correspondents for intellectual fellowship, but his emotional companions were 'Stella' (Esther Johnson) and her nurse, Mrs. Dingley. His correspondence with Stella conveys an atmosphere of exclusive intimacy which could not be achieved with his male friends, as this example from one of his letters shows:

So, young women, I have just sent my tenth to the post-office, and, as I told you, have received your seventh (faith, I'm afraid I mistook, and said your sixth, and then we shall be all in confusion this month). Well, I told you I dined with lord Abercorn to-day, and that's enough till by and bye; for I must go write idle things; and twittle twattle. What's there to do with your little MD's? and so I put this by for a while. - 'Tis now late, and I can only say MD's a dear saucy rogue, and what then? Presto loves them the better.⁵⁸

Inside this cosy, protected world, Swift feels himself able to admit to error, and to let drop the tone of stern authority which he adopts when lecturing young brides. Absent also is the tone of intellectual exuberance which marks the correspondence with Pope in the mid 1720s; here, Swift feels that he has little to prove except his affection for the recipients of his letters. Mundane occurrences may be addressed at leisure in these missives, and Swift also brings in a childish idiom and nicknames ('MD' is commonly accepted to stand for 'My Dears', that is, Stella and Mrs. Dingley, while 'Presto' is Swift himself). The fact that Swift wished to cordon off these letters into a separate section of correspondence, however, tells us how seriously he took his intimacy with these women, and how firmly he wished to control the relationship. His politeness to women with whom he cannot allow himself to associate to any greater depth is Swift's way of maintaining control over the social intercourse; the special language, the personal correspondence separate from his other communications, and the nicknames, are his way of controlling the intimacy of his relationship with Stella (the fact that he addresses the letters to both Stella *and*

⁵⁸Jonathan Swift, Letter XI: Saturday 9 December 1710, *Journal to Stella* (1766-7; reprinted ed. Harold Williams, two volumes, Oxford University Press, 1948), i.116-17.

Mrs. Dingley, thus providing an inbuilt chaperone, is an added method). In these ways, Swift and La Rochefoucauld are extremely similar in their approach to dealings with the opposite sex: both have careful guidelines, and do not indulge in public flirtation (at least, in the latter's case, not any more), and keep the physical aspect of the female at arm's length, through observation of a social code. Where they differ, is that Swift seems to take his relationships to greater emotional extremes, a facet of his character which is reflected in his work: his objection to women as social creatures is damning in its ferocity, but when he does desire contact with a woman, that relationship must be sequestered, and at all times under the Dean's control.

It is useful to look at a contrasting relationship of Swift's, one which he had difficulty in keeping under control, and for this we must consider his connection with Hester Vanhomrigh, 'Vanessa'. This young woman often tempted Swift to indiscretion (and on occasion may have succeeded), and was driven to express her passion for him, which he always sought to quash, in several letters. To understand the confusion which this relationship caused in Swift's mind, and the emotional turmoil which it gave rise to in his private life, we turn to his poem of c.1713, 'Cadenus and Vanessa'. We soon discover that Swift is employing old tricks to attempt to repress Vanessa's attractive reality:

Wisdom's above suspecting wiles:
The Queen of Learning gravely smiles;
Down from Olympus comes with joy,
Mistakes Vanessa for a boy;
Then sows within her tender mind
Seeds long unknown to womankind,
For manly bosoms chiefly fit,
The seeds of knowledge, judgement, wit.
Her soul was suddenly endued
With justice, truth and fortitude;
With honour, which no breath can stain,
Which malice must attack in vain;⁵⁹

Swift first puts Vanessa into the idealized context of a child of the gods (this time without attendant irony) and helps to remove her as a sexual entity by emphasizing her 'masculine' qualities (cf. Pope's praise of Martha Blount in the 'Epistle to a Lady', above). He attempts to create Vanessa in the image of his ideal companion, possessed of a keen intellect and quick to recognize Swift as a teacher and paternal figure. Swift's desire to act as a father figure to Vanessa is accompanied by the desire to see her rise to a perfect completion under his tutelage, and at this

⁵⁹Jonathan Swift, 'Cadenus and Vanessa' (written c.1713, published 1723); pp.130-53 in Swift, *Poems*, ll.198-209.

stage in the poem we see his desire to think of her development as perfectly controlled and evinced in his presentation of her in the care of higher powers. Swift charts the progress of the relationship in this idealized manner for several stanzas, but when he comes to deal with his own reciprocation of Vanessa's passions, we sense him struggling both to convey the tumult which the emotional disruption threw him into, and to control and deal with the situation by contextualizing it on his own terms:

But when her tutor will affect
Devotion, duty, and respect,
He fairly abdicates his throne,
The government is now her own;
He has a forfeiture incurred:
She vows to take him at his word,
And hopes he will not think it strange
If both should now their stations change.
The nymph will have her turn, to be
The tutor; and the pupil, he:⁶⁰

Swift realizes that he must acknowledge his feelings towards Vanessa, but at the same time cannot give in to them; he allows her to gain control of the relationship in external terms, as she becomes the tutor in a strange role-reversal. However, it is Swift who retains emotional control of the relationship, by default: his own impotence to consummate the emotional bond between Vanessa and himself allows him to maintain her as an object of admiration, saved from the indignant bile of so many of his pieces addressing women, but one that cannot interfere with his own state of freedom. At the poem's end, Swift reiterates the idealized presentation of Vanessa, so that she is further distanced from his portrayal of the stuffy, impotent Dean, who does not understand erotic love or the games of lovers; he does this through a reference to Venus's brief for the creation of Vanessa:

She was at Lord knows what expense
To form a nymph of wit and sense;
A model for her sex designed,
Who never could one lover find.
She saw her favour was misplaced;
She needs must tell them to their face,
They were a stupid, senseless race.⁶¹

Swift has Vanessa apotheosized as an example of fate (represented by Venus) presenting an imbalance, where men are unable to appreciate (or, in Cadenus's case,

⁶⁰Swift, 'Cadenus and Vanessa', ll.806-15.

⁶¹Swift, 'Cadenus and Vanessa', ll.872-9.

unable to enjoy) a creature that so nearly approaches perfection. Swift washes his hands of the situation, just as the goddess does, and, in fact, Swift is able to abdicate responsibility to fate, who 'Left all below at six and seven'(l.896). He cunningly holds his hands up, to show himself at the mercy of Vanessa, but equally that he is incapable of ever becoming the lover that she would like him to be. In this way, Swift shows himself as capable of repression of female identity through positive portrayal as Pope in the 'Epistle to a Lady'.

Juvenal again affords us a model for Pope's less violently polemical attitudes:

Can you bear to be the slave of a woman, when so much rope is
at hand,
when those vertiginous top-floor windows are standing open,
and when the Aemilian bridge nearby offers assistance?
If none of these means of deliverance seems to have any appeal,
don't you think it better to sleep with a little boy-friend?
A boy-friend doesn't argue all night or ask you for presents
as he lies beside you, or complain that you are not giving a
hundred
percent and are not producing the requisite puffing and panting.⁶²

Juvenal's satire is direct, perhaps even vicious, as Pope's sometimes is, but there is a tacit acknowledgement that, for all the protestation, women are an essential part of life, as is their sexuality. Whereas one has the feeling that, apart from the comfort offered to him by MD, Swift really would rather do without women altogether, Pope, like Juvenal in this instance, is aware of the importance of women in society, and aware that if masculine control is to be maintained, then some concessions will have to be made. At first glance, Juvenal's violent and crude imagery may seem to have more in common with Swift's 'excremental' verse than with anything Pope wrote, but this art of containing invective within acceptable social limits while continuing to exert a controlling influence is a line which Swift crosses repeatedly without much thought for any offence he may be giving, but which Juvenal and Pope rarely do.

If Swift can attack the inconsequentialities of women as he sees them, in pieces such as 'The Furniture of a Woman's Mind' (written ?1727, published 1735) or the 'Letter to a Young Lady On Her Marriage' (see above) with (at least at the time of composition) unrepentant aggression, then, Pope is forced to tread the same ground much more carefully. *The Rape of the Lock* (written 1711, published: two-Canto version 1712; five-Canto version 1714) provides the most famous example of this:

⁶²Juvenal, *Satires*, 6.29-37.

Some Nymphs there are, too conscious of their Face,
 For Life predestin'd to the *Gnomes* Embrace.
 These swell their prospects and Exalt their pride,
 When Offers are disdain'd, and Love deny'd.
 Then gay Ideas crowd the vacant Brain;
 While Peers and Dukes, and all their sweeping Train,
 And Garters, Stars and coronets appear,
 And in soft Sounds, *Your Grace* salutes their Ear.
 'Tis these that early taint the Female Soul,
 Instruct the Eyes of young *Coquettes* to roll,
 Teach Infant-Cheeks a hidden Blush to know,
 And little Hearts to flutter at a *Beau*.⁶³

Pope portrays women as being too easily distracted by the surface glitter of life, but unlike Swift, when he does so he makes it clear that the aspects of society which disrupt female development are not entirely of their own making. Swift shows women as self-corrupting creatures who create their own distractions, but Pope makes them victims of society's conventions and decorum, which raise expectations of their behaviour and appearance which they then struggle to live up to. It is not the case that Pope condones the superficiality of the 'Nymphs' he describes, but simply that he allows them a place in society, and connects their faults with an essential role which they are expected to perform; Swift, on the other hand, seems to see their whole existence as vulgarly unnecessary. Pope operates chiefly by attacking a type, or type of behaviour in, women, rather than attacking a trait which he considers to be inherent in all women:

This Day, black Omens threat the brightest Fair
 That e'er deserved a watchful Spirit's care;
 Some dire Disaster, or by Force, or Slight,
 But what, or where, the Fates have wrapt in Night.
 Whether the Nymph shall break *Diana's* law,
 Or some frail *China* jar receive a Flaw,
 Or stain her Honour, or her new Brocade,
 Forget her Pray'rs, or miss a Masquerade,
 Or lose her Heart, or Necklace, at a Ball;
 Or whether Heav'n has doom'd that *Shock* must fall.⁶⁴

Values become corrupted and meaningless in the young female mind, with 'Pray'rs' becoming simply part of a conventional routine, and the loss of her 'Heart' or

⁶³Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock* (written 1711, published, two-Canto version 1712, five-Canto version 1714), pp.217-42 in Pope, *Poems*, five-Canto version, i.79-80.

⁶⁴Pope, *Rape*, ii.101-10.

'Honour' to some handsome beau being of as little (or as great) consequence as if she lost her jewellery. Pope uses materialism to indicate the shallowness of the moral structure to which these nymphs adhere, but he is more interested in illustrating the depth to which these figures are couched in convention, a convention that, while making them at times ridiculous in their pursuit of such ephemeral pleasures, may also be implemented as a controlling device. Pope deliberately satirizes the shallow nature of court society in the poem, but he is also aware that such a society contains the potentially destructive forces of women. When he does not include a particular woman in this kind of social structure, he includes her in his own, and bids her join him in ridiculing the errant examples of her sex, as he does with Martha Blount in the 'Epistle to a Lady'. Here, in the 'Epistle', Pope is quick to point out the ludicrousness of any of these women attempting to break out of their superficial mindset, and the *Rape* is a conventional depiction of fashionable London society as much as it is a satire. Belinda's immortality at the end of the poem is the confirmation of a type of female selfhood which Pope understands, and which he can deal with when it is in its correct social context. *The Rape of the Lock* was written as a placating device to show the inconsequentialities of contemporary society, but it relies for its efficacy on the established nature of a society in which women live by highly superficial standards.

Both these writers exhibit unusual psychological proclivities in their attitude to the opposite sex, which to a certain extent interfere with the approach they wish to be seen taking to the social treatment of women in their work. Valerie Rumbold indicates one of Pope's dilemmas:

...Pope's devotion to women who quietly accepted society's prescriptions was complicated by his attraction to those who, like Lady Mary [Wortley Montagu], shared the verbal energy and public self-assurance that Patty [Martha Blount] was content to leave to men. Indeed, his troubled fascination with striking and assertive women is a recurring theme both in his poetry and in his personal life.⁶⁵

Pope had reportedly proposed marriage to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu on one occasion, only to have her laugh in his face, so it is understandable that he would at times champion her social opposites. What is inherent in Pope's attitudes to women in society, and absent from Swift's, is a desire to be commanded by a strong feminine influence, which at the same time exists submissively within an overarching patriarchal social structure. Swift and Pope both wish to maintain women in a fixed position within eighteenth century society, but Pope, a small, physically deformed and

⁶⁵Valerie Rumbold, *Women's Place in Pope's World* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.xv.

emotionally insecure man, longed for a maternal figure in his life (his famous garden at Twickenham contained a prominent monument to his late mother). In contrast to Pope's quasi-Edipal urge, Swift entertained a strong paternal, almost inverse-Electra complex, the desire to act as a father to those who could fulfil the filial role but who wanted to be seen by Swift as potential lovers; Ehrenpreis expands:

If we assume a childhood to be natural when it is passed with a father and a mother, in a secure family and a settled residence, Swift had to deal with shattering conditions. His father was gone before the son even appeared. Such a loss would give fatherhood unique meaning: missing it so deeply, Swift would expect much from those whom he set in his father's place; and he would therefore feel repeatedly disappointed by these older men. On those whom he loved, he would bestow, as his best gift, a fatherliness too stern for their needs, or a father's direction where they looked for a lover's softness.⁶⁶

In their attitudes to women both these writers display a need for the creation of a secure emotional structure. Both ideally desire control, hence their praise of a patriarchal social structure, and of the women who submit to it, but Swift ^{sees} himself as capable of proactively enforcing that control: he attempts to overwhelm those elements of femininity which oppose his aims, with violent and insulting polemic, and possessively guards those objects of desire whom he believes may fit into his scheme. Pope's need is for a reassuring and consoling female figure in his life, but he is less confident and resorts to persuasion and subterfuge more readily than Swift. The misogynistic current runs strongly through the work of each, as the oppression of the intellectually assertive and sexually active female is driven by their instinctual desire for a stable and unchanging social hierarchy, and within that a similarly regulated personal emotional life. Each resorts to whatever means he has available in order to maintain that control.

⁶⁶Ehrenpreis, *Swift*, i.33.

CHAPTER III: REMODELLING SOCIETY

1. The Misanthropist as Hero-Maker

In his poem, 'To Mr. Addison, Occasioned by his Dialogues on Medals' (written ?1713, revised 1719, published 1720), Pope laments the decline of the Roman empire, which, once a ravenous beast of burgeoning growth, crumbled to a pitiful state of decay:

See the wild Waste of all-devouring years!
How Rome her own sad Sepulchre appears,
With nodding arches, broken temples spread!
The very tombs now varnish'd like their dead!
Imperial wonders rais'd on Nations spoil'd,
Where mix'd with Slaves the groaning Martyr toil'd;
Huge Theatres, that now unpeopled Woods,
Now drain'd a distant country of her Floods;⁶⁷

The Rome which Pope wishes to portray is based more on organic development than a consciously structured civilization. Symbols of sophisticated social development, for which the Romans were renowned, such as temples and theatres, become for Pope part of the great leviathan of the city, which grows like an animal into a state of violent and rapacious beauty, and then shrinks away again and grows cold, becoming a 'Sepulchre' to its own, younger self. Pope nurtures the impression that Rome is magnificent, but that its unselfconscious growth can continue only for a finite period, and then the great energy will leave it. Further on in the verse, Pope leads us to the natural consequence of this; that is, that a great importance becomes attached to art as a record of the 'life' of a great civilization:

Theirs is the Vanity, the learning thine:
Touch'd by thy hand, again Rome's glories shine,
Her Gods, and god-like Heroes rise to view,
And all her faded garlands bloom a-new.
Nor blush, these studies thy regard engage;
These pleas'd the Fathers of poetic rage;
The verse and sculpture bore an equal part,
And art reflected images to Art.⁶⁸

⁶⁷Alexander Pope, 'To Mr. Addison, Occasioned by his Dialogues on Medals' (written ?1713, revised 1719, published 1720), pp.215-16 in Pope, *Poems*, ll.1-8.

⁶⁸Pope, 'To Mr. Addison', ll.45-52.

Here, Pope describes the way in which, he believes, those who record the physical and spiritual aspects of society's history in art can remain simultaneously outside, and an essential part of that society. It is Rome's glory which affords the raw material for the praise of human social development, but it is the artist who contrived the medal, and the collector who restores it, who enable Roman achievement to be seen to best and lasting advantage. Pope sees poetry and visual art-forms as feeding off each other as well ('The verse and sculpture bore an equal part, / And Art reflected images to Art'), and so the whole historical representation of a society develops through the effort of its participants, those who chronicle their deeds, and, finally, those who maintain these records and refresh them; indeed, Pope seems to surreptitiously accredit these last contributors with the most lasting influence, as Rome itself may only provide a pitiful monument to its own glories, but at the hands of the coin-collector, 'all her faded garlands bloom a-new'. Having extolled the values of this process of revivification, Pope proceeds to exhort a similar development in his own time and land:

Oh when shall Britain, conscious of her claim,
Stand emulous of Greek and Roman fame?
In living medals see her wars enroll'd,
And vanquish'd realms supply recording gold?
Here, rising bold, the Patriot's honest face;
There Warriors frowning in historic brass:
Then future ages in delight shall see
How Plato's, Bacon's, Newton's looks agree;
Or in fair series laurell'd Bards be shown,
A Virgil there, and here an Addison.⁶⁹

It is significant that Pope seems to be longing more for the opportunity for great deeds to be recorded than for the great deeds themselves; he addresses the poem to Addison, and it becomes in the final few lines a panegyric on that man and his achievements, but it is difficult not to entertain the suggestion that, to some extent, Addison is merely a stand-in for the figure of Pope himself. Pope suggests that the honour of being part of the 'fair series [of] laurell'd Bards' is one which can be supplied only as part of the monument to the greatest achievements in British intellectual history (alongside those of Bacon and Newton), and that these great thinkers and artists may then be put forward to bear comparison with the great ancient and classic writers, Plato, Virgil, *et al.* Pope does not, of course, suggest that he himself is worthy of a place in this pantheon, but in the very act of writing this poem he offers himself as a chronicler of his age. He wishes to be part of the

⁶⁹Pope, 'To Mr. Addison', ll.53-62.

incremental growth of the history of modern civilization, just as the makers of the coins, and those who collect them, are part of the history of Roman achievement. Pope places himself outside the litany of great names, however, because he may never consider himself as part of the first flush of organic social growth, but simply a reflector of and on that growth; one of the most skilled and ingenious of his type, but still a chronicler of his time, not an achiever in a dynamic sense.

This may seem unfair to one of our great poets, but less so when it is acknowledged that this is the status to which Pope himself aspires, and which he has no desire to go beyond. Howard Erskine-Hill opines that Pope's 'To Mr. Addison' 'broadens our sights through its very concentration. As it unfolds it becomes clear how in the early decades of the eighteenth century "Augustan" is subsumed by the notion of a new Golden Age'⁷⁰; Pope is as much a part of this looking forward to a new, grander future for Britain as he is a condemner of its past and present follies, but he is still limited to a similar capacity as chronicler, albeit a more positive one. He wishes British achievement to be raised up and its individuals put forward as synecdochic representatives of British excellence, worthy of comparison with the ancients, but as this team of internationals is sent out in Pope's imagination, he, even in theory, must remain one of the fans cheering from home. To understand Pope's limitations as a satirist, it is necessary to look at a poem which expresses the reverse side of those sentiments expressed in 'To. Mr. Addison': 'One Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty' (written 1740, published 1797). Here, Pope trawls out a long list of individuals from contemporary political and social life who suffer from the same illness which seems to dog Britain as a whole. As with his depiction of ancient Rome in 'To. Mr. Addison', Pope again portrays the civilization with which he is dealing as an organic entity, but in this case it does not simply 'grow cold' and die, its energy spent, but is subject to the ravages of the disease of corruption:

Can the light packhorse, or the heavy steer,
The sowzing Prelate, or the sweating Peer,
Drag out with all its dirt and all its weight,
The lumb'ring carriage of thy broken State?
Alas! the people curse, the carman swears,
The drivers quarrel and the master stares.
The plague is on thee, Britain, and who tries
To save thee in th'infectious office *dies*.⁷¹

⁷⁰Howard Erskine-Hill, *The Augustan Idea in English Literature* (Edward Arnold, London, 1983), p.267.

⁷¹Alexander Pope, 'One Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty' (written 1740, published 1797); pp.827-31 in Pope, *Poems*, ll.69-76.

In this poem, when Pope is examining the weaknesses of a society, he does not produce a series of figures symbolic of human achievement (as in 'To Mr. Addison'), but instead launches attacks on his contemporaries, ferociously demoting the tone of the poem to a much more mundane level. This is the essence of Pope's social misanthropy: when he is optimistic about the possibilities for mankind, Pope looks towards a 'Golden Age', where great figures of the past and present become symbols for human virtue; in his pessimistic moods, as here, his centripetal misanthropic urges turn his energy inwards upon society, and he dissects its minutiae with furious disgust. In this sense, Pope is greatly contrasted with Swift, in that the former seems to find it much easier to feel beneficent towards mankind as a whole, and finds that individuals are in fact more likely to arouse his hatred and aggression. Admittedly, in this poem it is difficult to detect beneficent feelings towards mankind either in the abstract or the particular; as in 'Worms', Pope vilifies the individual types of mankind ('The sowzing Prelate, or the sweating Peer'), and helps to use these examples of scurrility to predicate a generally diseased state for the whole country. However, as in 'To Mr. Addison', we discover that Pope is once more desperate to lionize individuals in contrast to the general denigration:

Alas! on one alone our all relies,
 Let him be honest, and he must be wise,
 Let him no trifler from his school,
 Nor like his...still a...
 Be but a man! unministered, alone
 And free at once the Senate and the Throne;
 Esteem the public love his best supply,
 A ☼'s true glory his integrity:
 Both *with* his...*in* his...strong,
 Affect no conquest, but endure no wrong.
 Whatever his religion or his blood,
 His public virtue makes his title good.
 Europe's just balance and our own may stand,
 And one man's honesty redeem the land.⁷²

The references made are to Frederick, Prince of Wales, but the important aspects of this passage (as far as Pope's social misanthropy is concerned, at least) are those which indicate Pope's attempts to create an idealized figure as a social paradigm. By implication, the poet has elected a real individual to take on this role, but rather than simply extol, or even amplify, the virtues of that individual, Pope projects the qualities which he thinks necessary upon his hero as well. If (as John Butt suggests as probably true in the notes to this poem in his *Twickenham Pope*) the

⁷²Pope, 'One Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty', ll.85-98.

ellipses at 1.93 may be filled thus: 'Rich *with* his Britain, *in* his Britain strong', then that is a direct reference to 'The Patriot King's' attachment and loyalty to the British people (as opposed to George II's preference to Hanover). However, as well as making such direct references as this to perceived qualities in his chosen idealized individual, he also demands such classical virtues as 'honesty' and 'wisdom' to be pre-eminent in his character. What Pope is showing his reader here is that, while other individuals must be responsible for making the changes necessary to society, it is satirists such as himself who must recognize the individuals and set the standards by which these individuals must conduct themselves. In 'One Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty', Pope first describes with bitter verse the inadequacies of the defining figures of British society, and then shows his own antidote at the conclusion, as if he were the doctor diagnosing the patient's illness before prescribing the correct medicine. In 'To Mr. Addison', a similar process occurs, with the addressee being installed in the pantheon of greatness, which is itself a way of elevating the international status of British history. Pope wants us to see that the way to correct social ills is to raise those best qualified above the mass and to present them as representative of the correct structure for human social behaviour; he himself wished to be seen as one of the minds who helps to select and construct this representative, thus becoming an essential, but not essentially active, participant in the refashioning of society.

2. Fighting on Their Own Ground

Swift is not content to sit and wait for a new Golden Age, longing for new heroes; he wants to change things himself, as we have seen. A side-effect of this state-of-mind is that his social critiques, unlike Pope's, do not seem to present such obvious social paradigms. The Brobdingnagians may be intended as such in *Gulliver's Travels*, but even their virtues are confused as Swift is continually reminding himself of all that disgusts him in the actual society which his imaginary one mirrors. In *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), his satire on contemporary social and religious practice, he seems most emphatically concerned with pointing out the easy facility of mankind's corruption:

To conclude from all, what is man himself but a *micro-coat*, or rather a complete suit of clothes with all its trimmings? As to his body, there can be no dispute; but examine even the acquirements of his mind, you will find them all contribute in their order towards furnishing out an exact dress. To instance no more: is not religion a *cloak*, honesty a *pair of shoes* worn out in the dirt, self-love a *surtout*, vanity a *shirt*, and

conscience a *pair of breeches* which, though a cover for lewdness as well as nastiness, is easily slipped down for the service of both.⁷³

Swift, like Pope in the previous examples, is projecting his own opinions onto his literary depictions, but instead of the idealized figures which Pope uses, Swift has drawn out an everyman figure, which he then uses to evince his own general view of mankind. It is fitting that Swift should choose to describe this figure as dressed in its own expendable version of virtue, because Swift himself uses that figure as a posable doll, illustrating all the vices of mankind as the writer bends him into the positions he wishes. Essentially, Swift is saying that man himself (or, at least, man found outside Swift's select coterie of companions) does not exist as an individual, thinking entity, but is rather a facade, constructed of the socially acceptable manifestations of virtue which have only vague associations with the vital essence of those virtues themselves. The idea that the manipulating creature may wear or remove these representations of virtue to its own advantage only increases the strength of the impression that Swift sees endogenous virtue as, generally speaking, a myth; rather, virtue is used merely as a disguise for the unpleasant reality of human nature. Indeed, in the general satire of *A Tale of A Tub*, the idea of differing levels of human virtue (and a consequent opposition of views of those holding different levels of virtue) is virulently mocked by Swift:

It was highly worth observing the singular effects of that aversion or antipathy which Jack and his brother Peter seemed, even to an affectation, to bear towards each other. Peter had lately done *some rogueries* that forced him to abscond, and he seldom ventured to stir out before night, for fear of bailiffs. Their lodgings were at the two most distant parts of the town from each other; and whenever their occasions or humour called them abroad, they would make choice of the oddest unlikely times, and most uncouth rounds they could invent, that they might be sure to avoid one another: yet, after all this, it was their perpetual fortune to meet. the reason of which is easy enough to apprehend; for the frenzy and the spleen of both having the same foundation, we may look upon them as two pairs of compasses, equally extended, and the fixed foot of each remaining in the same centre; which, though moving contrary ways at first, will be sure to encounter somewhere or other in the circumference. Besides, it was among the great misfortunes of Jack to bear a huge resemblance with his brother Peter. Their humour and dispositions were not only the same but there was a close analogy in their shape, their size, and their mien. Insomuch,

⁷³Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of A Tub* (1704), pp.1-103 in Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of A Tub and Other Works* (World's Classics, Oxford, 1986), p.36.

as nothing was more frequent than for a bailiff to seize Jack by the shoulders, and cry 'Mr. Peter, you are the king's prisoner.'⁷⁴

Here, Swift uses the comparison between the Roman Catholic (Peter) and Calvinist (Jack) churches, as an example of religious antipathies belying a near doctrinal resemblance. However, this passage also has great resonance for Swift's writing as a whole; the final sentence leaves us with the perception of humanity as the corrupt everyman, as in the '*micro-coat*' passage, quoted above, and we are led to understand that our interchangeability of external appearance is synonymous with our universal guilt - we may all be justly accused of the crime of human corruption. Jack and Peter go to enormous lengths to distance themselves from each other, but in the end are forced into proximity by the simple fact that they are of the same origin and substance and that any differences are, as Swift points out, simply dictated by preference, fashion and convenience. He is attempting to dismiss faction as an irrelevance in the face of his policy of misanthropic discrimination, and elsewhere in the text points out the way in which religious (that is, institutionalized) codes may be manipulated as easily as more general moral ones:

However, after some pause, the brother so often mentioned for his erudition, who was well skilled in criticisms, had found in a certain author which he said should be nameless, that the same word which in the will is also called *fringe* does also signify a *broomstick*, and doubtless ought to have the same interpretation in this paragraph. This, another of the brothers disliked because of that epithet *silver*, which could not, he humbly conceived, in propriety of speech be reasonably applied to a *broomstick*, but it was replied upon him that this epithet was understood in a *mythological* and *allegorical* sense. However, he objected again why their father should forbid them to wear a *broomstick* on their coats, a caution that seemed unnatural and impertinent; upon which he was taken up short, as one who spoke irreverently of a *mystery* which doubtless was very useful and significant, but ought not to be over-curiously pried into or nicely reasoned upon. And in short, their father's authority being now considerably sunk, this expedient was allowed to serve as a lawful dispensation for wearing their full proportion of silver fringe.⁷⁵

As the brothers argue about how and why they should be allowed to defy the wishes of their late father in favour of the fashionable wearing of a silver fringe on their coats, Swift propagates the idea that religious rules, like all rules of moral conduct, may be distorted easily by manipulation and misinterpretation. This description shows us, with humour, the foibles of shallow human nature, and the

⁷⁴Swift, *A Tale of A Tub*, p. 97.

⁷⁵Swift, *A Tale of A Tub*, pp.41-42.

susceptibility of our minds to fashionable suggestion, but despite the comparatively light tone, it is as damning a conviction as any in Swift's misanthropic agenda. This is primarily because Swift has denied the representative power of the institution; that is, he points out (as we have seen him do with the institution of marriage) the inherent weaknesses in a social or moral structure which is supposed to be a purified and strengthened systematization of virtue. Once Swift has denied mankind the validity of its code structures, he also denies them the possibility of individual exculpation through membership of an essentially sound moral and social structure.

Swift, then, recognizes the value of using representatives of a social structure in the process of presenting an evaluation of it, just as Pope does; the difference in their rhetorical use of these representatives is most strongly evident in the fact that Pope much more regularly uses them to present his own vision of an ideal society, as in the 'Epistle to a Lady', 'To Mr. Addison', or in the concluding lines to 'One Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty'. Swift singles out his representatives almost always as a means by which to show the inherent flaws in the social structure which he is examining; this, unlike his fellow writer, allows him to (albeit often to an excessive degree) focus upon actual characters, safe in the knowledge that the more flaws he discovers, the deeper the corruption will seem to run. Pope recognized the problems of artificially contrived 'heroes', or social representatives, but even he must concede, in a roundabout way, that the true faults of humanity are much more easily examined in a piece of undilutedly critical satire. In his 'Prologomena and Notes Variorum' to *The Dunciad (In Four Books)* (Book 4, written c.1741, published 1742; Books 1-3, revised c.1741, published 1743), Pope (in the guise of 'Ricardus Aristarchus') condemns the practice of constructing a hero:

But when [Scriblerus] cometh to speak of the *Person* of the *Hero* fitted for such a poem [as *The Dunciad*], in truth he miserably halts and hallucinates. For, misled by one Monsieur Bossu, a Gallic critic, he prateth of I cannot tell what *Phantoms of a Hero*, only raised up to support the Fable. A putrid conceit! As if Homer and Virgil, like modern Undertakers, who first build their house and then seek out for a tenant, had contrived the story of a War and a Wandering, before they once thought either of Achilles or Æneas. We shall therefore set our good brother and the world also right in this particular, by giving our word, that in the *greater Epic*, the prime intention of the Muse is to exalt Heroic Virtue, in order to propagate the love of it among the children of men; and consequently that the Poet's first thought must needs be turned upon a real subject meet for laud and celebration; not one whom he is to make, but one whom he may find, truly illustrious.⁷⁶

⁷⁶Alexander Pope, 'Ricardus Aristarchus of the Hero of the Poem', *The Dunciad (In Four Books)* (Book 4, written c.1741, published 1742; Books 1-3, revised c.1741, published 1743); pp.709-805 in Pope, *Poems*, pp.711-12.

This goes against what Pope seems to do in those poems mentioned above, but crucially it must be viewed in the ironic context in which it was written: as with Swift's social criticism, *The Dunciad's* targets may be rendered with more accurate evaluation of their faults because they are not representative of the strengths of society, but of the weaknesses. Pope would surely argue that in his other poems he does indeed pick worthy representatives of the best aspects of society in Martha Blount, Addison, Prince Frederick, and so forth; however, this would discount the vital aspect of Pope's own character, the desire to become part of the incremental historical development of society, while avoiding becoming its dynamic focus. In their treatment of central figures in their satires, each of these two is attempting to prepare a social structure which can allow a heroic figure to thrive and, ultimately, succeed. In Pope's case, the heroic figure is one which he has helped to construct, enhancing natural advantages in the individual to help make him part of a tradition of virtue and achievement, and his misanthropic attacks upon other individuals within that society are attempts to clear the way for his chosen idealized figure. In Swift's case, his misanthropic attacks are attempts to weaken his enemies and put himself in a position of strength as an active political and social satirist.

In *The Dunciad*, Pope uses the momentum built up by his attacks and lampoonery of the offending individuals in his social and literary experience as a means by which to construct an image of a society deeply influenced by these individuals:

She mounts the Throne: her head a Cloud conceal'd,
In broad Effulgence all below reveal'd,
('Tis thus aspiring Dulness ever shines)
Soft on her lap her Laureat son reclines.
Beneath her foot-stool, *Science* groans in Chains,
And *Wit* dreads Exile, Penalties and Pains.
There foam'd rebellious *Logic*, gag'd and bound,
There, stript, fair *Rhet'ric* languish'd on the ground;
His blunted Arms by *Sophistry* are born,
And shameless *Billingsgate* her robes adorn.
Morality, by her false Guardians drawn,
Chicane in Furs, and *Casuistry* in lawn,
Gasps, as they straiten at each end the cord,
And dies, when Dulness gives her Page the word.⁷⁷

Swift portrays society's institutions as inherently corrupt and thus open to manipulation by the avaricious and vengeful people who created them; Pope, on the

⁷⁷Pope, *The Dunciad*, iv.17-30.

other hand, prefers to allow the conduct of those he despises to create enemies within social structures, elements which oppose those virtues which his semi-constructed heroes embody. As we see in the passage quoted above, the goddess Dulness (representative of the opinions and character which would oppose the development of a new Golden Age) develops an army of personified human character flaws, who stymie the burgeoning growth of modern knowledge and artistry, and suffocate the moral life of the country. This portrayal is something of a companion piece to the long opprobrious description of the state of the nation in 'One Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty', in that both seek to characterize the country as an organic being which may suffer illness and even death; here, though, Pope has extended the metaphor so that the illness has been characterized, and an entirely imaginary battle, involving the fate of the nation just as intricately, goes on in parallel to the actual conflicts being played out in contemporary social and political arenas. This is how Pope wishes to enter public life, and how he wishes to make a real impact upon social history: he is not a great political or social player *per se*, but as a satirist he may involve himself, as a purely intellectual figure, in the battle between the virtues of the British people and their corruption and vices; because of the connection between this battle and reality, Pope can involve himself in his own society without exposing himself to the personal attacks which he might provoke in a greater social or political capacity. He is not immune to personal attacks by any means, but at least with this method it is possible for him to restrict these to his own - that is, intellectual and literary - terms.

As Pope prefers to conduct his battles within these literary parameters, and *The Dunciad* is the greatest example of topical satire in his oeuvre, it is worth examining further how he constructs his opponents in the poem. Pope himself is not, of course, an actual figure in the poem, but as narrator and author he interacts with the verse in different ways. At the beginning of Book II, we have the introduction of Pope's chosen fleet of Dunces, in preparation for their games:

And now the Queen, to glad her sons, proclaims
 By herald Hawkers, high heroic Games.
 They summon all her Race: An endless band
 Pours forth, and leaves unpeopled half the land.
 A motley mixture! in long wigs, in bags,
 In silks, in crapes, in Garters, and in rags,
 From drawing rooms, from colleges, from garrets,
 On horse, on foot, in hacks, and gilded chariots:
 All who true Dunces in her cause appear'd,
 And all who knew those Dunces to reward.⁷⁸

⁷⁸Pope, *The Dunciad*, ii. 17-26.

This bizarre imaginary scenario allows Pope to indulge his misanthropy in a most delicious fashion, drawing the ridiculous figures out from all walks of life in order to attend their Queen and mother. It is interesting that Pope chooses to make his Dunces appear as both subservient subjects and children to a greater, but abstract entity, which acquires personification through their homage; this is as if to imply that the corruption of Dulness, although instigated by individuals in their attitudes, opinions and activities, once set in motion acquires a dynamic of its own which in fact begins to control those who instigated it, and the begotten becomes the begetter. This dynamic, as we saw in the previous passage of verse, is all consuming. Pope creates the concept of a procession of Dulness, always moving centrally inwards to the Queen at the centre, and this is how he portrays human corruption so often in his work: that is, as initially self-nurturing, but also ultimately internecine and self-destructive. Pope wryly suggests that 'half the land' would fit into the category of 'Dunce', and certainly this would fit comfortably into his pattern of misanthropic desire to be removed from the masses; however, in the gaming sequences themselves, something happens which seems to be beyond the narrow intention of simply condemning a large portion of society:

'Now turn to diffrent sports (the Goddess cries)
And learn, my sons, the wond'rous power of Noise.
To move, to raise, to ravish ev'ry heart,
With Shakespear's nature, or with Johnson's art
Let others aim: 'Tis yours to shake the soul
With Thunder rumbling from the mustard bowl,
With horns and trumpets now to madness swell,
Now sink in sorrows with a tolling bell;
Such happy arts attention can command,
When fancy flags, and sense is at a stand.
Improve we these. Three Cat-calls be the bribe
Of him, whose chatt'ring shakes the Monkey tribe:
And his this drum, whose hoarse heroic base
Drowns the loud clarion of the braying Ass.⁷⁹

Pope clearly intends to portray the tribe of Dunces as artless, drowning or blocking artistry through sheer weight of opinion, meaningless din which fills the air, but does not enliven the intellect or soul. To some extent he succeeds, and at first we think that the figures of the Dunces will become submerged in the cacophony, and that we will be left once more simply to contemplate Dulness, the embodiment of the stultifying force to which the Dunces are subject, and which they represent.

⁷⁹Pope, *The Dunciad*, ii.221-4.

However, this does not happen; instead of the blank simplicity of the Dunces' approach resulting in them being faded into the background, the wider architecture of Dulness, they are instead strengthened, becoming a cohesive and united group within the poem which takes on a greater and more powerful significance (although what that significance actually is is not yet clear in the structure of the poem). While Pope may have intended a simple irony here, there actually does seem a determined 'wond'rous pow'r of Noise'; the Dunces produce noise, as opposed to music, and are therefore nearer to the raw fabric of life than the artistry which Pope is purveying. We sense, as the verse progresses, that Pope's misanthropic energy has invested his mock-epic characters with an uncanny life-force, and he himself, attached to proceedings by his assumed role of master social-satirist and his desire for a vicarious involvement in social progress, is forced to supply this power while being unable to completely control how it is dispensed.

As the gaming continues, we see more and more that the Dunces are possessed of a burgeoning, yet unnatural energy in their proceedings:

The playing Prelate, and his pond'rous grace,
With holy envy gave one Layman place.
When lo! a burst of thunder shook the flood.
Slow rose a form, in majesty of Mud;
Shaking the horrors of his sable brows,
And each ferocious feature grim with ooze.
Greater he looks, and more than mortal stares:
Then thus the wonders of the deep declares.
First he relates, how sinking to his chin,
Smit with his mien, the Mud-nymphs suck'd him in:
How young Lutetia, softer than the down,
Nigrina black, and Merdamente brown,
Vy'd for his love in jetty bow'rs below,
As Hylas fair was ravish'd long ago.⁸⁰

Pope cannot but allow a sexual element to enter the gaming, and, ridiculous though it is in external appearance, this episode indicates the dynamic, reproductive energy with which Dulness has become invested in the course of the poem. Even the deathly sleep which descends upon the land after the games have concluded seems to mirror the natural pattern of sexual expenditure, followed by restorative sleep. The energy of the Dunces' gaming is, however, offset by a consciousness that the energy source is unnatural and insalubrious; in the text, this is represented by the 'nut-brown Maids', who entice the Dunces to frolic in the filth. The unwholesome quality with which they are invested reflects the fact that it is Pope's misanthropy which fuels the

⁸⁰Pope, *The Dunciad*, ii.323-36.

gaming; he cannot control the release of corrupted yet reproductive energy, and the gaming, for all its joyful vigour, always carries with it the stench of unpleasant sentiment and bitter emotion, manifest in its unnatural and unhealthy physical aspects. As we come to the conclusion of the poem, we realize that the natural conclusion to the Dunces' games is indeed unhealthy, unnatural and opposed to human virtue, and it is ourselves and Pope who are the worse for it:

See skulking *Truth* to her old Cavern fled,
Mountains of Casuistry heap'd o'er her head!
Philosophy, that lean'd on Heav'n before,
Shrinks to her second cause, and is no more.
Physic of *Metaphysic* begs defence,
And *Metaphysic* calls for aid on *Sense*!
See *Mystery* to *Mathematics* fly!
In vain! they gaze, turn giddy, rave, and die.
Religion blushing veils her sacred fires,
And unawares *Morality* expires.
Nor *public* Flame, nor *private*, dares to shine;
Nor *human* Spark is left, nor Glimpse *divine*!
Lo! thy dread Empire, CHAOS! is restored;
Light dies before thy uncreating word:
Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;
And Universal Darkness buries all.⁸¹

Pope's misanthropic urge to set all his enemies dancing as objects of ridicule has allowed the energy from the virtuous and intellectually healthy aspects of society to be drained away, and into the gaming of the Dunces, which is a celebration of the death of knowledge, virtue and light. Pope is unable to detach himself from the process of *The Dunciad* once it has been set in motion, and, like a parasite, the poem feeds off the energy generated by his hatred, and holds him through his desire to enact the role of satirist, decreeing those worthy and unworthy of social approval. It is because Pope is reluctant to involve himself directly in social and political developments that his misanthropic rhetoric is permitted to turn against him in this way; if he presented himself as an active figure in this social mechanism, instead of just active in the satirical representation of that mechanism, he could not have his intellectual energies channelled into the growth of Dulness, as they are in *The Dunciad*, even as he tries to fight against that very growth. *The Dunciad* is by turns hilarious and terrifying, as we realize the implications of the 'Universal Darkness', something that terrified the universalist Augustans such as Pope more than it terrifies us as modern readers. In allowing his misanthropy to launch social attacks of which he is the author, but to which he adds no solution, Pope is forced to remain attendant

⁸¹Pope, *The Dunciad*, iv.641-56.

as the spectre at the feast of Dulness, but he acts as an omen to us and himself, not to the imaginary revellers. He was not a figure in the anticipated Golden Age of 'To Mr. Addison', or the solution hoped for in the conclusion to 'One Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty', but at least in these poems he nominates and enhances a representative hero; in *The Dunciad*, Pope's absence of spirit results in an absence of influence, and the force of his misanthropic rhetoric breaks free and works against him.

3. The Importance of Personae

Where Pope absents himself from direct social interaction, Swift attempts to orchestrate his own alterations and improvements to society in person. Swift ventures into politics quite regularly in his middle and later years, as in *The Drapier's Letters*, for example, but there he often adopts a rhetorical persona to do his work for him. To get a better idea of Swift's own character and perspective as it manifests itself in his socio-ideological agenda (as far as misanthropic attacks are concerned, at least), it is convenient to examine the occasions in his political involvement when a Swiftian persona is not involved, alongside the endeavours he makes in the field of politics and his own profession, the Church, when he does use the device of a persona. To address the former, Swift's attacks upon Richard Tighe, a convinced Whig politician, who initially roused Swift's ire through a report he made to Lord Carteret on a sermon by Sheridan, but who was latterly pursued on political grounds, are of interest. In the poem 'Mad Mullinix and Timothy' (written and published 1728), where the eponymous Mullinix is the character of a mentally unstable beggar who wandered the city of Dublin, holding forth on various matters from a Tory perspective, and Timothy is the unfortunate Tighe, Swift lays into the subject of his satire with the same ferocity which he reserved for his attacks upon William Wood:

Thy peevish, and perpetual teasing,
 With plots; and Jacobites and treason;
 Thy busy never-meaning face;
 Thy screwed-up front; thy state grimace;
 Thy formal nods; important sneers;
 Thy whisperings foisted in all ears;
 (Which are, whatever you may think,
 But nonsense wrapped up in a stink)
 Have made thy presence in a true sense
 To thy own side so damned a nuisance,
 That when they have you in their eye,

As if the devil drove, they fly.⁸²

As before, Swift resorts without scruple to personal, physical abuse, and again makes use of the device of undermining the foundations of his opponent, claiming that he is as much of a liability to his supporters as he is a danger to his enemies, if not more so. The force of the physical disgust which Swift conveys belies the fact that these poems were fuelled substantially by political motives, but the fact that he is quick to single out the individual in his attacks, to try and create a weak link, should remind us of the process which he used in *The Drapier's Letters*. The difference between the poems directed against Richard Tighe and Swift's more rhetorically successful misanthropic attacks, is the absence in the former of a Swiftian persona. The attacks certainly originate from Swift, but Swift needs to feel the sense of opposition between himself and his enemy in a more tangible fashion, and when this is missing, the rhetoric tends to lose direction and deconstruct itself with the force of its own invective. In another poem in the series, 'Clad All in Brown' (written c.1728, published 1745), Swift echoes his own 'excremental' verse on women:

Foulest brute that stinks below,
 Why in this brown dost thou appear?
 For, wouldst thou make a fouler show,
 Thou must go naked all the year.
 Fresh from the mud a wallowing sow
 Would then be not as brown as thou.

'Tis not the coat that looks so dun,
 His hide emits a foulness out,
 Not one jot better looks the sun
 Seen from behind a dirty clout:
 So turds within a glass enclose,
 The glass will seem as brown as those.⁸³

The verse here quickly becomes excremental in a literal sense, and it seems hard to believe that Swift is allowing his intellect precedence over his emotion; the expression of sheer physical revulsion at Tighe's presence seems to override any genuine political commentary, leaving us with an impression that in this poem, spleen-venting is Swift's predominant concern. Because Swift does not use an opposing rhetorical persona to represent himself in the poem, the sense of balance between

⁸²Jonathan Swift, 'Mad Mullinix and Timothy' (written and published 1728); pp.336-43 in *Poems*, II.47-58.

⁸³Jonathan Swift, 'Clad All in Brown' (written c.1728, published 1745); pp.345-6 in Swift, *Poems*, II.1-12.

propriety and impropriety, which is necessary to effective satire, is lost. Instead, Swift simply takes Tighe's character further and further from the reality, and buries it in various nicknames and rebarbative imagery.

Comparing these poems with Swift's exploits in the political arena when he is representing a cause with which he has a connection shows us a clear difference. We have already seen the effectiveness of the persona employed in *The Drapier's Letters*, but another pertinent example is 'A Character, Panegyric, and Description of the Legion Club' (written and published 1736). This poem directs Swift's anger furiously against the events in the Irish House of Commons in 1734-5, where an attempt was made to have the pasturage tithes which augmented the meagre stipends of the clergy rescinded. In this poem, Swift may strut his stuff, as it were, wearing both his intellectual's and his clergyman's robes:

As I stroll the city, oft I
Spy a building, large and lofty
Not a bow-shot from the College,
Half a globe from sense and knowledge.
By the prudent architect
Placed against the church direct;
Making good my grandam's jest,
Near the church - you know the rest.⁸⁴

Here, Swift is able to set up an undisguised persona which displays all the important defining associations of his character: that is, his membership of the Church of Ireland, his status as an intellectual and a man of letters, and his desire for social justice. As the figure of Swift looks at the Irish Commons, he does so as an outsider, but not as an individual; he associates himself with 'the College' - erudition, intelligence and perspicuity - and opposes this to the idiocy which he perceives in the Commons. Secondly, he associates himself with the Church, and (with only a semi-jocose tone) implies that the Commons is its opposite, a place of evil. To confirm all this, he even mentions his 'grandam', thus solidifying the image of himself within the poem as a man of learning, a man of the Church, and a man who is predisposed by his heritage to an opposition to the goings on of the Commons. In short, Swift wishes to confirm that he is opposed to 'The Legion Club' both personally and professionally.

The poet actually makes reference to himself directly in relation to the Commons at ll.35-8 ('Yet should Swift endow the schools / For his lunatics and fools, / With a rood or two of land, / I allow the pile may stand.'), but then, having

⁸⁴Jonathan Swift, 'A Character, Panegyric, and Description of the Legion Club' (written and published 1736), pp.550-6 in Swift, *Poems*, ll.1-8.

established his own superior moral and social position, he describes with a barely restrained hatred, the punishment to which he would subject the parliamentarians:

Let them, when they once get in
 Sell the notion for a pin;
 While they sit a-picking straws
 Let them rave of making laws;
 While they never hold their tongue,
 Let them dabble in their dung;
 Let them form a grand committee,
 How to plague and starve the city;
 Let them stare and storm and frown,
 When they see a clergy-gown.
 Let them, 'ere they crack a louse,
 Call for the orders of the House;
 Let them with their gosling quills,
 Scribble senseless heads of bills;
 We may, while they strain their throats,
 Wipe our arses with their votes.⁸⁵

Swift ends this masterfully abusive poem with a damnation upon all the members of the House, that they should be dealt with by their own master, the devil, just as he has encouraged so many other of his enemies to punish their unfortunate representatives. Swift's initial establishment of his own moral and social status as far superior to that of the House, in the opening lines of the poem, permits an established dichotomy between good and evil to emerge (Wood, too, we will remember, was condemned as of the devil's party by Swift), and the rhetorical mechanism seems self-enclosed. Unlike the series of poems which denounce Richard Tighe, however, this does not mean that the invective seems misdirected, or that it turns upon itself (indicating that diseased corruption is in the mind of the attacker), but rather that a genuinely effective rhetorical misanthropy has been created. Pope's *Dunciad* similarly employs caricatures of enemies in ridiculous postures and activities, but, marvellous though the imagery of that poem is, the absence of any regulating figure representing social virtue (all we have are abstract representatives of virtue, who come off badly against the all-consuming power of Dulness) means that Pope's rhetoric gets out of hand and loses momentum and emphasis.

Swift is not restricted to using one of his carefully constructed poetic personae when he is attacking those without his own institutions; in 'On the Irish Bishops' (written and published 1732), a poem written in a similar tone to 'The Legion Club', we find Swift still in his clergyman's clothes, but turning with equal

⁸⁵Swift, 'Legion Club', ll.47-62.

ferocity against his own; when he rails against the three bishops who attempted to pass bills in the Commons which restricted the glebe lands of the clergy:

Our bishops puffed up with wealth and with pride,
To hell on the backs of the clergy would ride;
They mounted, and laboured with whip and with spur,
In vain - for the devil a parson would stir.
So the Commons unhorsed them, and this was their doom,
On their croziers to ride, like a witch on a broom.
Though they gallop so fast; on the road you may find 'em
And have left us but three out of twenty behind 'em.
Lord Bolton's good Grace, Lord Carr, and Lord Howard,
In spite of the devil would still be untoward.⁸⁶

Like *The Drapier's Letters*, the author of this poem was not initially known to the public, but it was clear that it was written by a clergyman, and thus allowed Swift to establish his persona and attack the bishops from a sound base. Here, he also goes so far as to praise the Irish Commons for rejecting the bills, showing that Swift's strength of invective may be manipulated and re-directed at different targets at will. Swift uses his old trick of associating the enemy with Satan, 'Archbishop of Hell', and declaring 'How nearly this bishop our bishop resembles!' (l.7). However, because Swift has a substantial, albeit implicit, textual presence as a clergyman in the same hierarchy as the bishops whom he attacks, the rhetorical structure remains sound. To underline this, a comparison may be made with a shorter contemporary poem, 'Advice to a Parson':

Would you rise in the church, be stupid and dull,
Be empty of learning, of insolence full:
Though lewd and immoral, be formal and grave,
In flattery an artist, in fawning a slave,
No merit, no science, no virtue in wanting
In him that's accomplished in cringing and canting:
Be studious to practice true meanness of spirit;
For who but Lord Bolton was mitred for merit?
Would you wish to be wrapped in a rocket - in short,
Be as poked and profane as fanatical Hort.⁸⁷

Again, Swift has no hesitation in naming his targets, in this instance Hugh Boulter, a Churchman who was Walpole's choice to represent English interest in

⁸⁶Jonathan Swift, 'On the Irish Bishops' (written and published 1732); pp.499-500 in Swift, *Poems*, ll.17-26.

⁸⁷Jonathan Swift, 'Advice to a Parson: An Epigram' (?written and published 1732); p.500 in Swift, *Poems*.

Ireland, and another Churchman who enjoyed, so to speak, mixed relations with Swift, Josiah Hort. The irony is heavy and crude as to become sarcasm, and the viciousness of the attack, while never quite reaching the depths of physicality for which Swift has such a strong predilection, is personal and extreme. The style is Swift's, but there is a little doubt over to whom this poem should be attributed, as it was published anonymously; these doubts, despite the stylistic similarity, are to a certain extent understandable because, as we have seen, Swift's most effective satires so often rely on his rhetorical presence in the poem. David Nokes points out how Swift's relationship with his own profession could lead to these mixed feelings, and initiate the misanthropic attacks, where he is sometimes willing to put his head on the line, and sometimes not:

Of all the disappointments of Swift's life, his failure to secure a place in the Church of England was the most severe. Not only did it condemn him to a life of 'exile' in Ireland; it also cast doubts, as he recognized, on his real value to the men he served so faithfully and with whom he was in almost daily contact.⁸⁸

Swift thus felt an ambivalence towards the institution to which he owed his living, and it is this ambivalence which provokes him to turn against his own Church at times, and exhibit the same ferocity to his colleagues as he does towards those who represent opposing institutions. Also, however, this uncertainty of where he stands with his own establishment often undermines Swift's confidence in the clergyman's identity; when he manages to maintain that confidence and use the clergyman persona effectively, the end result may be devastating, as in 'The Legion Club' or 'On the Irish Bishops'. When he has not got the confidence to insert the clergyman persona (as in 'Advice to a Parson', where the speaker is unspecified), or when he attempts to adopt the rhetoric of the clergyman without the position of authority (as in 'A Letter to a Young Lady On Her Marriage'), the rhetoric is unconvincing and the misanthropy may be construed merely as spleen-venting and invective. Louis A. Landa contends that his attacks on the Irish Church are concerned more with the faults which Swift perceives to pervade it, rather than wholly its treatment of Swift himself:

It would be inaccurate to view [Swift's] pessimism concerning the Irish Establishment as a reflection of misanthropy or of temperamental melancholy. It would likewise be misleading to see it merely as the result of personal failure, though the personal element played a part. Certainly,

⁸⁸David Nokes, *Jonathan Swift, A Hypocrite Reversed, A Critical Biography* (Oxford University Press, 1985), p.146.

there runs throughout his clerical career a note of grievance, or frustration, and defeated hopes. But there is another and a better explanation: his hopelessness derived primarily from his realistic appraisal of the church of Ireland. He was aware of its general debility from historical despoliations, of its internal dissensions and vulnerability to external attack, and of the weakness of the Irish economy on which it depended. These of themselves are sufficient to account for his pessimistic attitude.⁸⁹

Landa is correct insofar as he roots Swift's dissatisfaction with the Irish Church Establishment in a knowledge of its faults, vulnerability to external attack, and internal corruption and internecine bickering; however, if one claims that Swift does not harbour bitterness concerning his personal failure to secure a position in the Church of England, there are several difficulties with the extreme nature of many of his attacks upon members of the Irish clergy. If one cannot impute the vehemence of the invective in poems such as 'The Legion Club', 'On the Irish Bishops', and so forth, to Swift's bitterness at not being able to establish himself in his desired environment, then we must surely posit an endogenous misanthropy, which is a much stronger jeopardizing factor concerning Swift's status and intentions as a clergyman than a simply explained case of professional resentment. Landa attempts to convey Swift's desperate and rigorous attempts to revivify the Irish Church, while simultaneously endeavouring to protect it from the ravages of the avaricious English government and landowners; this is a reasonable thing to do, but to then portray Swift's pessimistic, often opprobrious attitudes regarding the Church simply as a dissatisfaction with its state of health is unconvincing. What has in fact happened in Swift's progress through the Church Establishment is that circumstances have conspired to put him in a position which exacerbates and exaggerates his innate potential for misanthropic thought and action. Because he was denied entry to the English Church, Swift was forced into a position which is both unnatural and deleterious to him socially, politically and professionally. He does not enjoy his 'exile' in Ireland, being so far from the central powerhouse of British politics, nor does he enjoy the distance between him and so many of his literary and intellectual colleagues and companions. He complains regularly in his letters of his frustrations with the Irish people, and in *The Drapier's Letters* we have what is both a stolid, ingenious and passionate defence of the interests of the Irish populace, and, remarkably, at the same time, a condemnation of their foolishness, gullibility and willingness to be exploited, as an expression of Swift's frustration at being forced to represent them.

There is much evidence that Swift would rather have been a part of the British social, political and ecclesiastical structure, even without his explicit confirmation of

⁸⁹Louis A. Landa, *Swift and the Church of Ireland* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1954), p.xvi.

these sentiments. He cultivated many more friends in English literary society than he did in Irish society at all, and his affection for associations such as those with Pope and his other fellow Scriblerians indicates that he regarded England as his spiritual and intellectual home as well as, for preference, his professional one. Likewise, there are numerous smaller details which show his regard for England and its institutions as being greater than that which he had for his native Ireland, such as his attempts in social circles to pass himself off as an *Oxford Man*, despite having spent only a few weeks at the university early on in his clerical career. The importance of this sense of displacement from what, if not his natural environment by birth, is his natural environment through spiritual and intellectual inclination, is that we have within it the implication of a defensive motive for an intensified misanthropy. It is not simply that, like Pope, Swift felt unable to fully engage with a society that was suspicious, often disgusted, and always frightened by him (although all three of these statements could have been sincerely made of Swift at various points in his career), but that he had been removed, to his mind, and quite possibly that of the objective observer, with grievous injustice, from his rightful course of progression. This had coerced him into a lifestyle and professional capacity which frustrated his ambitions throughout his career.

For this reason, Swift may not, like the financially independent Pope (he was the first writer to amass a personal fortune from his work alone, the first professional writer in that sense), simply turn his back on society from time to time and say he is tired of it, but he is shackled to the outer frame of social and professional life, neither able to reach its heart, nor put any great distance between himself and its outer reaches. While Pope may allow himself to ideologically drift from the conventions of social morality and process from time to time, Swift is always encaged in the pressurized position of being a committed defender of the people and Church of his native country, but at the same time really believing that he should be holding higher professional status. Seen in this light, it is perhaps more easily understood that Swift may feel as if society is not only opposed to him in its conventions, but that it has done him a wrong; this is not to imply that Swift's misanthropy is justified or mitigated to any great extent by external circumstances, but it does show how these circumstances helped to direct, focus and intensify Swift's pent-up feelings of hatred for his fellow man.

Swift's problems with the Irish people often seem to centre on a lack of unity and a tendency to internecine fighting, as well as the problems imposed externally by English landowners and the like; Pope exhorts mankind to a greater unity of purpose and subordination to the general good in *An Essay on Man*, but we find the most accurate description of his motives for social satire in 'The First Epistle of the First Book of Horace Imitated' (written c.1737, published 1738):

Well, if a King's a Lion, at the least
 The People are a many-headed Beast:
 Can they direct what measures to pursue,
 Who know themselves so little what to do?
 Alike in nothing but one Lust of Gold,
 Just half the land would buy, and half be sold:
 Their Country's wealth our mightier Misers drain,
 Or cross, to plunder Provinces, the Main:
 The rest, some farm the Poor-box, some the Pews;
 Some keep Assemblies, and wou'd keep the stews;
 Some with fat Bucks on childless Dotards fawn;
 Some win rich Widows by their Chine and Brawn;
 While with their silent growth of ten per Cent,
 In Dirt and darkness hundreds stink content.
 Of all these ways, if each pursues his own,
 Satire be kind, and let the wretch alone.
 But show me one, who has it in his pow'r
 To act consistent with himself an hour.⁹⁰

This echoes the sentiments concerning the greed pervading society to which many of Pope's letters refer, and re-emphasizes Pope's satirical relationship with Juvenal in its similarity to the 'it's hard *not* to write satire' passage in *Satire 1* (for both, see above), but it clearly shows the problems which each ambitious satirist must face when he is creating a new ideological blueprint for society. There is an evident disgust in this passage of verse; Pope cannot stand the parasitic nature of many of society's members (the rich seem to be targeted specifically, but there is also a sense of mankind possessing an inherently avaricious streak). A people united by nothing more than the 'Lust of Gold' must eventually fracture as everyone finds it impossible to 'pursue their own' to any significant degree. The dilemma which faces both Pope and Swift in this context is that the urge to destroy greed of gain and the desire to save people from themselves may become confused. Swift, caught within the narrow dimensions of his life in Ireland, and becoming frustrated with his pyrrhic victories and inability to effect significant change for the better, finds that his misanthropic rhetoric demotes to the level of invective, and becomes simply a weapon for indiscriminate attack and damage. Pope suffers also from the tendency to allow pain from personal slight to dictate a descent from effective social satire to lampoonery; when this happens, the least damaging result (to Pope) is for his verse to seem unambitious and petty, the most damaging being evinced by *The Dunciad* - a fascinating, and at several points brilliant poem, but satirically deconstructed as a

⁹⁰Alexander Pope, 'The First Epistle of the First Book of Horace Imitated' (written c.1737, published 1738), pp.624-30 in Pope, *Poems*, ll.120-37.

consequence of Pope's failure to keep control of his misanthropic rhetoric. In 'The First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace Imitated - To Augustus' (written c.1736, published 1737), he seems to show recognition of this problem and of how society attempts to rectify it:

But Times corrupt, and Nature, ill-inclin'd,
 Produc'd the point that left a sting behind;
 Till friend with friend, and families at strife,
 Triumphant Malice rag'd thro' private life.
 Who felt the wrong, or fear'd it, took th'alarm,
 Appeal'd to Law, and Justice lent her arm.
 At length, by wholesom dread of statutes bound,
 The poets learn'd to please, and not to wound:
 Most warp'd to flatt'ry's side; but some, more nice,
 Preserv'd the freedom, and forebore the vice.
 Hence satire rose, that just the medium hit,
 And heals with morals what it hurt with Wit.⁹¹

Pope sees satire as approaching a healthy moral state, and doubtless thinks of himself as one of, if not *the* leading moral satirist of his day; Pope certainly set out with the intention of being, above all else, a highly moral poet, and Swift, while never saying so in such clear terms, always sets out to plough an improving furrow, even if he slips from this path with rather too frequent ease. Pope places contemporary satire, in the passage quoted above, as a framework in which, ideally, the 'Triumphant Malice' which marked embryonic attempts at the mode is tempered and sublimated into the rhetorical misanthropy which he and Swift use at various times, to varying degrees of effectiveness. Significant, however, is the fact that these *Imitations*, which declare Pope's satirical agenda in the greatest detail of any of his works, are ostensibly based upon the *Epistles of Horace* (noted for the geniality of his satire), but often contain a strong element of bitterness which is more Juvenalian in origin. Pope is using a false line of tradition in this sense, attempting to place himself as a literary descendent of gentle, lyrical satire, while he is in fact more closely related to the occasionally grudgingly mitigated, but none the less fearsome spite of Juvenal. Pope's rhetorical skill and frequent lyric quality are undoubted, but in clearing a place firmly in the Horatian school of satire, he is deceiving the reader and disguising his true disposition, if not his intent.

Pope's and Swift's satire is forever concerned with this determination to evoke a healing temperance, 'steering betwixt the extremes of doctrines seemingly opposite'; their attempts to coerce recalcitrant elements in society into this state of temperance

⁹¹Alexander Pope, 'The first Epistle of the Second Book of Horace Imitated - To Augustus' (written c.1737, published 1738), pp.624-30 in Pope, *Poems*, ll.251-62.

through the use of the rhetoric of misanthropy is the most difficult and most dangerous aspect of their work. Both are sure that society can be improved, perhaps even saved from itself, by following a certain way, a set doctrine, moral, ethical, or intellectual, which they have contrived to their satisfaction and are willing to follow ceaselessly. Unfortunately, both encounter massive difficulties when it comes to compromising their respective world views with reality; when political allegiances (such as the failed Tory government to which they gave their support) or personal and professional causes fail, they attempt to reject society, rather than risk dilution of their own aims and ideals. Swift is kept to some degree static for the main part of his life, boxed in by his enforced position in Irish religion, politics, and social causes, relieved only to a certain extent by his involvement with intellectual and social life in England. His satire, when most greatly frustrated by the indolence, ignorance, or avarice of his fellow man, bears some resemblance to a dog gnawing viciously at the rope which tethers it, as he lambasts those of the profession or the nation to which he is committed in duty and, despite everything, in soul, but from which his spirit, intellect and ambitions receive a constant battering. If Swift attempts to give as good as he gets in his battle with society, Pope is somewhat more elusive; he retaliates to individual attacks, but is, on the surface, a more ethereal presence, watching over and gently (or not so gently) manipulating the development of his satires. The Englishman is less confident in his ability to correct the sins of the masses (of which he is similarly more convinced that he is a part) than his Irish counterpart. In their attempts to remodel the structure of society through the rhetorical use of misanthropy, then, the vital element is their ability and inclination to present a strong ideological persona, which represents their own position; this does not have to be as obvious as, say, M.B. Drapier, but it must be there. When this persona is not an element in the satire then the rhetoric of misanthropy uses the poetry for its own destructive ends, and invective becomes the master of the writer, not his tool.

CONCLUSION

If the importance of tracing literary precedent for Pope's and Swift's rhetorical misanthropy is paramount in the close study of their work, the importance of identifying precedent for the philosophies which this study has identified (in however fractured a form) within the texts, achieves a similar prominence in a discussion of the overarching ideologies of these writers. John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) affords us the first of two major influences upon the works of Pope and Swift, in particular the latter, with the proposition that the mind of man contains no innate ideas:

It is an established opinion amongst some men that there are in the *understanding* certain *innate principles*, some primary notions [...] characters, as it were, stamped upon the mind of man, which the soul receives in its very first being and brings into the world with it. It would be sufficient to convince unprejudiced readers of the falseness of this supposition, if I should only show [...] how men, barely by the use of their natural faculties, may attain to all the knowledge they have, without the help of any innate impressions, and may arrive at certainty without any such original notions or principles. For I imagine anyone will easily grant that it would be impertinent to suppose the *ideas* of colours innate in a creature to whom God has given sight, and a power to receive them by the eyes, from external objects; and no less unreasonable would it be to attribute several truths to the impressions of nature and innate characters, when we may observe in ourselves faculties, fit to attain as easy and certain knowledge of them, as if they were originally imprinted on the mind.⁹²

Without going into the argument in great depth, it is easy to perceive straight away several germane aspects of this proposition in relation to the rhetorical misanthropy and personal ideologies of Swift and Pope. Pope's contention that Man seems to have avarice alone as a natural tendency (see *To Broome*, 1723 and the 'Epistles in Imitation of Horace', quoted above), rather than any inherent system of ethics, and his urgency in exhorting a subservience to an external moral and religious hierarchy, agree strongly with Locke's opinion that the inchoate mind is a *tabula rasa*, and must therefore be shaped, for good or ill, by external influences. Similarly, Swift's comparisons between Gulliver and the Yahoos is an implicit questioning of the principle of innate ideas, and an exploration of the effects of experience and environment upon similar species (even if this portrayal does contain some seriously dubious jumps in logic). Most relevant to the discussion of Swift's use of

⁹²John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690; reprinted Everyman, London, 1976), p.17.

misanthropy, though, is one particular consequence of accepting Locke's premise, which Kenneth MacLean articulates:

Shorn of innate ideas, a man, however, appears less perfect, less the image of his Creator, and thus an obvious inclination among certain writers who followed Locke to debase man and lower his already fallen state may have been assisted by the conclusion of the first book of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.⁹³

As MacLean points out, Swift could not be termed an explicit 'follower' of Locke, and he does take part in several elaborate parodies of the *Essay* which may be found in the records of the Scriblerus circle. However, given his interest, conscious or otherwise, in the idea of innate moral tendencies versus external influence, and taking into account his tendency to support the latter theory, the idea that a man 'shorn of innate ideas' is a more contemptible man has special relevance to Swift and his work. The idea that mankind must be instructed and corrected is central to Swift's satire, and is also linked with his desire to adopt a paternal, didactic role. It is when a recalcitrant mankind refuses to do as it is told that Swift's character suddenly reverts to an intense childishness in its aggression and intensity; as a result, we may observe the flaws in a system which shows mankind in the position of empirical learners, who must be guided by those who know and think better, rather than relying on their own innate sense of purpose - which, of course, isn't there, and even if it is, it has such a base form that it cannot create the basic structure for a viable ethical system.

Oliver Goldsmith in his poem of 1759, 'The Logicians Refuted', himself uses rhetorical misanthropy to satirize Swift's refusal to accept his fellow man as a thinking, reasoning animal in a wider philosophical system:

Logicians have but ill defin'd
As rational, the human kind;
Reason, they say, belongs to man,
But let them prove it if they can.
Wise Aristotle and Smiglesius,
By ratiocination specious,
Have strove to prove with great precision,
With definition and division,
Homo est ratione perditum.
But for my soul I cannot credit 'em.
And must in spite of them maintain,
That man and all his ways are vain;

⁹³Kenneth MacLean, *John Locke and English Literature of the Eighteenth Century* (Yale University Press, 1936, revised Russell & Russell, New York, 1962), pp.10-11.

And that this boasted lord of nature
 Is both a weak and erring creature.
 That instinct is a surer guide
 Than reason-boasting mortals pride;
 And that brute beasts are far before 'em
*Deus est anima brutorum.*⁹⁴

Goldsmith here emphasizes the internal contradiction of Swift's approach to mankind, as well as parodying the no-nonsense approach which Swift took to both philosophy and anthropology (many would argue that he took this approach because he had enormous gaps in his understanding of both, but that is, of course, partly Goldsmith's point). The contradiction centres on the fact that while Swift desired strongly to administer correction to mankind, and to form it in his own image, he also did not wish to see the masses aspiring to rise above their intellectual station. He wishes to rise above the majority in a patriarchal-deistic role, which allows him to manipulate the functioning of society, but is perpetually overcome with disgust at the stupidity and greed which he perceives in the characters of his adopted children. However, although Swift wants mankind to do as it is told, he does not wish it to rise above the state of tamed ape; we see this in *Gulliver's Travels*, when Swift ridicules Gulliver for attempting to become more like the unnatural Houyhnhnms, thus abandoning the natural advantages of the Yahoos, and it is this point which Goldsmith chooses to make with the conclusion of his poem:

Of beasts it is confess'd, the ape
 Comes nearest us in human shape,
 Like men he imitates each fashion,
 And malice is his ruling passion:
 But both in malice and in grimaces,
 A courtier any ape surpasses.
 Behind him humbly cringing wait,
 Upon the minister of state:
 View him soon after to inferiors
 Aping the conduct of superiors:
 He promises with equal air,
 And to perform takes equal care.
 he in his turn finds imitators,
 At court the porters, laquees, waiters,
 their master's manners still contract
 And footmen, lords and dukes can act.
 Thus at the court, both great and small,
 Behave alike, for all ape all.⁹⁵

⁹⁴Oliver Goldsmith, 'The Logicians Refuted. In Imitation of Dean Swift' (written ?, published 1759); in Oliver Goldsmith, *Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith*, ed. Arthur Friedman (Five volumes, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1966), iv.411-13, ll.1-18.

Goldsmith perhaps takes the satire to unnecessary extremes when he suggests that, for Swift, '*Deus est anima brutorum*', but this does serve to convey the way Swift sets up a paradigm for mankind as the subservient Yahoo - and still he detests that paradigm. Swift is portrayed in the imitation in his familiar mode of attacking institutionalized man, as the poem turns upon the upper classes and their servants, and the overall tone of the poem is intended to emphasize Swift's rejection of mankind as an alien species; however, it is important not to forget that this is part of the same ideological framework which ties Swift in with Locke. W.M. Spellman effectively conveys their similarities in this way, as he describes Locke's attitude towards his fellow man in a way which could apply equally to Swift:

He imposed fierce demands upon his fellows, demands which to us seem hopelessly excessive. But by setting these onerous standards of conduct for men, by insisting that given the proper commitment most individuals could come to know God's law and recognize that it was in the best interests of their long-term happiness to obey it, Locke was demonstrating typical Puritan rigour in that most important business of life. The standard was high because the sense of urgency was so great; the 'law enacted by a superior power and emplaced in our own heart' presaged great things if only men would work to discover it and govern their lives accordingly.⁹⁶

This passage has strong echoes of Pope's exhortations in the *Essay on Man* as well, but it is Swift who follows the pattern of declining the concept of innate ideas and then demanding vigorous improvement of his fellow man. This process in fact forms the seed of his misanthropy, as it dictates that he must judge his fellow man as incapable of independent moral and intellectual development, and then, when his own rigorous standards fail to be met, or are ignored completely, it seems that his fellow man is irredeemable. If the Lockean system of developing a programme which man must follow is used by Swift, he is inevitably disappointed; the fact that Swift cannot trust mankind to develop at a satisfactory rate and in a satisfactory direction by himself means that, when his own plans go disastrously wrong, he must reject mankind with a bitter ferocity - he must blame them as unworthy rather than take the responsibility for them which his assumed paternal role dictates he should.

Although Swift manages to work within this Lockean system most of the time, and produces some highly effective pieces of rhetorical misanthropy with it,

⁹⁵Goldsmith, 'The Logicians Refuted', II,41-58.

⁹⁶W.M. Spellman, *John Locke and the Problem of Depravity* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988), p.62.

they are almost always severely flawed in that the rhetoric becomes impure to some extent: that is, it becomes invective and spleen-venting, as opposed to the carefully structured escalation of artificially generated hatred and anger. Also, in terms of Swift's own personal and professional status, the victories he wins are almost inevitably pyrrhic ones. Only occasionally does he succeed in transcending this system successfully, but when he does so it shows him at his most accomplished, both as a satirist and as a rhetorician. Probably the most cogent and compact example of this transcendent style is *A Modest Proposal* (1729), the essay in which he adopts the persona of a businessman (although it must be noted that, in the context of rhetorical misanthropy, the persona is once again just another version of Swift, and so fits into the theory that only when such a persona is present can his satire be said to be truly successful) also suggests an interesting way of combating penury and over-population in working-class Ireland:

As to my own Part, having turned my thoughts for many years, upon this important subject, and maturely weighed the several *Schemes of Other Projectors*, I have always found them grosly mistaken in their Computation. It is true a Child, *just dropt from its Dam* , may be supported by her Milk, for a Solar Year with little other Nourishment; at most not above the Value of two shillings; which the Mother may certainly get, or the Value in *Scraps*, by her lawful Occupation of *Begging*: And, it is exactly at one Year old, that I propose to provide for them in such a Manner, as, instead of being a Charge upon their *Parents*, or the *Parish*, or *wanting Food and Raiment* for the rest of their lives; they shall, on the contrary, contribute to the feeding, and partly to the Cloathing, of many thousands.

There is likewise another great Advantage in my Scheme, that it will prevent those *voluntary Abortions*, and that horrid Practice of *Women murdering their Bastard Children* ; alas! too frequent among us; sacrificing the *poor innocent Babes*, I doubt, more to avoid the Expence than the Shame; which would move tears and pity in the most Savage and inhuman Breast.⁹⁷

It is difficult to appreciate the assured, measured tone which Swift maintains throughout the whole of the essay without reading it in its entirety, but here one can at least glean the meticulous way in which the writer has achieved a rhetorical balance and symmetry. Swift's proposer assumes a calm, almost jovial tone and talks about the possibility of eating the children of the Irish working classes as if he were talking about a project for culling sheep. In the second part of this quotation, we see how Swift at his satirical best may dispense with uncontrolled invective, and instead uses a

⁹⁷Jonathan Swift, *A Modest Proposal* (1729); pp.502-9 in Jonathan Swift, *The Writing of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Robert A. Greenberg and William B. Piper (W.W. Norton & Co, New York, 1973), p.503.

delicious irony to point out the hypocrisy which the English oppressors practise: the statement about 'that horrid Practice of *Women murdering their Bastard Children*' stands out all the more clearly in contrast to the proposer's own ideas about sacrificing surplus children for food and clothing, simply because of the measured, practical tones with which the latter is delivered. Because Swift manages to hold his temper throughout the course of the essay, we get the tone and style which we might expect from any moderate and conventional political or social commentator, which makes the underlying brutality of what he is suggesting stand out all the more sharply. Only towards the conclusion of the essay does Swift begin to let his brisk and businesslike mask slip a little to reveal the true nature of his intentions:

But, as to myself; having been worked out for many Years with offering vain, idle, visionary Thoughts; and at length utterly despairing of success, I fortunately fell upon this Proposal; which, as it is wholly new, so it hath something *solid* and *real*, of no Expence, and little trouble, full in our own Power; and whereby we can incur no Danger in *disobliging* ENGLAND: For, this Kind of Commodity will not bear Exportation; the Flesh being of too tender a Consistence, to admit a long Continuance in Salt; *although, perhaps, I could name a Country, which would be glad to eat up our whole Nation without it.*⁹⁸

Swift does reveal his true character and intentions here, but not in the usual breaking down into fractured invective to which his rhetoric is so often subject; rather, this is a careful and conscious revelation of the substance of the rhetorical persona of the proposer - Swift wants us to be sure that although it is the proposer who is speaking, it is Swift who is thinking. The first sentence quoted above is pure Swift: 'having been wearied out for many Years with offering vain, idle, visionary Thoughts', etc. This is reminiscent of the *ennui* and disaffection of 'A Letter to a Young Lady On Her Marriage', the same sentiments which Goldsmith satirizes in 'The Logicians Refuted', but it is presented in such a skilful and tempered manner that we realize that Swift is satirizing his oppressors more than he is admitting his own failure. Sincere, too, is the asseveration that the proposal 'hath something *solid* and *real*' about it; Swift is trying to convey, again, that the persona he is using is a representation of his very own real intellectual self, but also that the argument which the proposer is putting up is both substantial and important. The resentful references to England are probably the nearest Swift comes in *A Modest Proposal* to breaking out of his controlled mode of satire (although the reference to the Irish shopkeepers a few lines previously, who 'if a Resolution could now be taken to buy our native

⁹⁸Swift, *A Modest Proposal*, p.509.

Goods, would immediately unite to cheat and exact upon us in the Price, the Measure, and the Goodness; nor could ever yet be brought to make one fair Proposal of just Dealing, though often and earnestly united to it', comes close as well). The implication that the Irish populace has been driven to feed off itself by the English is especially cutting, but it is not excremental, and it is not invective.

To find a further important philosophical precedent for this study, we turn back forty years before *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, to Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651). Like Pope, Hobbes establishes social contact as a prime necessity for a developing civilization:

The *Value*, or WORTH of a man, is as of all other things, his price; that is to say, so much as would be given for the use of his Power: and therefore is not absolute; but a thing dependent on the need and judgement of another. An able conductor of Souldiers, is of great Price in time of War present, or imminent; but in peace not so. A learned and uncorrupt Judge, is much Worth in time of Peace; but not so much in War. And as in other things, so in men, not the seller, but the buyer determines the Price. For let a man (as most men do,) rate themselves at the highest Value they can; yet their true Value is no more than it is esteemed by others.⁹⁹

As Pope shows in poems such as 'Worms', or *An Essay on Man*, he understands as Hobbes does the importance of human interaction, and an individual's subjugation to the general good. There is a necessity to be part of an active society, as each person needs the opinion of others to say when he or she must contribute to the well-being of that society, and also needs the reward that society will give for the contribution. Where Pope has problems with this doctrine is that, at the times when he wishes to banish mankind and disappear into coterie, although he is not attempting to assert an absolute severance from general society, he is attempting to put his own value on himself. The Scriblerus Club and other intellectual coteries which Pope and Swift joined throughout their careers, were representative of a desire to be a controlling influence on society; when society decided that it did not want them as a controlling influence, rather than accept society's judgement and assume a less prominent role in society, they attempt to maintain their self-appointed values in a separate and artificial context. However, rather than this being a complete betrayal of Hobbes's contention, on the contrary, we find that further on in *Leviathan* there are grounds for believing that Hobbes's doctrine supported the attitude of Pope and Swift:

⁹⁹Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, or The Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil* (1651; reprinted Everyman, London, 1965), p.44.

A Multitude of men, are made *One* Person, when they are by one man, or one Person, Represented: so that it be done with the consent of every one of that Multitude in particular. For it is the *Unity* of the represented, that maketh the Person *One*. And it is the Representer that beareth the Person, and but one person: And *Unity*, cannot otherwise be understood in Multitude.¹⁰⁰

Even though Pope and Swift never had complete support (and quite the opposite for much of the time), they were trying to represent the cause of the majority, and may justly be considered as believing that they were representatives of the Multitude. Hobbes is specifically speaking of the role of the sovereign in the Commonwealth, but the essence of what he says applies just as strongly to the situations of the two writers. When Swift becomes the Drapier, he is acting for the people of Ireland, in their interests, and as such may be seen as a representative figure, a 'One' providing unity for the 'Multitude'; similarly for Pope, when he speaks of the fate of mankind in *An Essay on Man*, or even in 'Worms', he is representative for the Multitude, because he so explicitly includes himself in it. Hobbes even includes opinion to support the retreat into coterie:

And because the Multitude naturally is not *One*, but *Many*; they cannot be understood for one; but many Authors, of every thing their Representative saith, or doth in their name; Every man giving their common Representer, Authority from himselfe in particular; and owning all the actions the Representer doth, in case they give him Authority without stint: Otherwise, when they limit him in what, and how farre he shall represent them, none of them owneth more, than they give him commission to Act.¹⁰¹

Pope and Swift could conceivably use this principle from Hobbes' treatise to argue that, by preventing the Multitude from limiting the degree to which the two writers may represent them, then they (that is, Pope and Swift) are acting even more decisively in the interests of the Multitude. Once nominated as representatives (as Pope and Swift believed they had been, in spiritual if not actual terms), speakers for their nation or society, they might contend, it is more greatly beneficial for the Multitude to allow them to speak without imposing limitations upon them. As Pope and Swift have, as nominated representatives, an acknowledged capacity for detecting the needs of society, society's intervention by limiting their capacity as

¹⁰⁰Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p.85.

¹⁰¹Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p.85.

representatives will also limit their capacity to cure the ills from which society itself suffers. In this fashion, they might attempt to justify a movement away from the instructions of the society which they represent once they have been nominated as those best equipped to deal with its problems: this is in many ways a valid justification not simply of satire, but of rhetorical misanthropy as a legitimate tool within satire. If the Multitude will not give 'Authority without stint', and consequently limit the representative power of their intellectual spokesman, then he may be seen to be simply maintaining his essential effectiveness to act in their interest by removing himself into an exclusive coterie which can allow him to maintain his own sense of worth, and his own authority as a representative, even to the ostensible detriment of those whom he represents. A passage in the 'Letter to the Publisher' from Pope's *The Dunciad Variorum* (written ?1719-28, published 1728, as *Variorum* 1729), indicates further the urgency which pressed Swift and him to confer authority upon themselves:

If Obscurity or Poverty were to exempt a man from satyr, much more should Folly or Dulness, which are still more involuntary, nay as much so as personal deformity. But even this will not help them: Deformity becomes the object of ridicule when a man sets up for being handsome: and so must Dulness when he sets up for a Wit. They are not ridicul'd because Ridicule in itself is or ought to be a pleasure; but tending part of mankind from imposition, because particular interest ought to yield to general, and a great number who are not naturally Fools ought never to be made so in complaisance to a few who are.¹⁰²

So, Pope and Swift so often resort to hatred of the individual because it is necessary for the protection of the majority. 'Particular interest ought to yield to general', and so those individuals who oppose the ideals of the writers from an enemy institution, or their authority from within their own professional, intellectual or social ranks, must be crushed. We have seen this method in practice in *The Drapier's Letters*, *The Dunciad*, and almost every other poem, novel or essay of social, moral or political content which either of these two ever published. Any justification for their misanthropic attitude can only lie, of course, in their aspirations: what they attempt to do for their fellow man (it may be argued) gives them the authority to decide how mankind should go about its business.

¹⁰²Alexander Pope, 'Letter to the Publisher' in *The Dunciad Variorum* (written ?1719-28, published 1728, as *Variorum*, 1729); pp.317-459 in Pope, *Poems*.

It is this conscious search for social development, and a security in that development once it is achieved (if it ever is), which both drive Pope and Swift into the misanthropic environment of the coterie, and also which justifies them staying in it. This search is also what allows them to draw the necessary authority to act as the 'One' which represents the 'Multitude': they know themselves to be representative of the people's best interests, and that those best interests are also the purest version of the people's opinion, and the version which will most likely perpetuate the well-being of the people in future. Therefore, when the people deviate from these best interests (that is, when they deviate from the attitudes and opinions which Pope and Swift hold most dear), the two writers are more closely representing the true nature and view of the Multitude if they move into an enclosed social coterie and preserve the attitudes which pertain to the best interests. If they were to follow the flux of public opinion and allow the Multitude to, in Hobbes's phrase, 'stint' their authority, they would not only be limiting their own beliefs, but they would be limiting their ability to help their fellow man. When Pope and Swift remember that this self-perpetuating authority is simply a persona, representing the view of the writers behind it, and through them the interests of the people, their rhetorical misanthropy becomes the most powerful satirical weapon in their armoury, capable of isolating deleterious influences and extirpating them, like a cancer. Conversely, when they forget the true purpose of this persona and it is lost in their personal spite and invective, the rhetoric either falls flat or spirals out of their control, often doing more damage to their cause than good. Ironically, although the former situation reminds us of their status as great writers, it is the second, when they are at their most purely, bitterly misanthropic, that we are reminded that they are as human as the rest of us.

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